Acle Parish Council

Meeting Date: Monday, 12th January 2015
Venue: Methodist Church, Bridewell Lane, Acle
Time: 7.30 p.m.

**PRESENT:**
Mr Tony Hemmingway – Vice-chairman
Mrs Annie Bassham, Mrs Angela Bishop, Mrs J Clover, Mr B Coveley, Mrs J Kenealy, Mr R Perry, and Mrs P Watson.

1. **PUBLIC FORUM**There were about 30 members of the public present, including representatives from Brundall, Hemblington, South Walsham and Upton Parish Councils, County Councillor Brian Iles and local police officers.
2. **APOLOGIES** Mr John Harriss – Chairman, Mrs Lana Hempsall (also district councillor) and Mrs M Steed.
3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN ITEMS ON THE AGENDA AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS**Rodney Perry and Jackie Clover declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in any financial transactions with the Recreation Centre, as Trustees.
4. **PART-FUNDING OF A POLICE COMMUNITY SUPPORT OFFICER**Leigh Jenkins, Business Liaison Manager with Suffolk Constabulary gave a talk and answered questions on the scheme to invite parish councils to part fund the cost of employing an additional PCSO. The scheme has run since 2009 in Suffolk; some where one parish/town has acted on its own and some where parishes have formed a cluster group to share the cost and the benefit.

Norfolk Constabulary now has funding for 10 PCSO posts, which, with 50:50 parish funding, could be 20 posts. This is in addition to existing policing in the area. A post would be for one officer, 37 hours per week, costing £16,740 for the year, and the officer’s work would be ring-fenced for the area(s) which had paid for the scheme. The cost includes all employment costs, NIC, training and pension costs. An officer employed though this scheme could not be sent to work in other areas, except in the case of a regional emergency, when any time spent away from the parish would be refunded to the parish.

There is a contract, (or service level agreement,) with the Norfolk Constabulary which sets out the details re the employment; payment schedule, holiday entitlement etc. (A copy of this agreement will be sent to the clerk.) Payment can be deferred if this helps with the parish’s precept request. If a parish withdraws from the scheme the PCSO is not made redundant but is absorbed into the constabulary. If the officer is on sickness leave for an extended time then an alternative officer would be found to cover the area.

The officer would be set tasks and areas to cover by the parish council but would also be contactable by the public via the call centre at 101. It was confirmed that the existing police officers already target known issues in the villages.

The benefits of the scheme are a greater engagement with the community, with an additional named officer in the community. The community can direct which areas of the parish are covered by the officer. The officer would be employed on the normal shift pattern, to complement the existing cover, within the hours from 7.00 to midnight.

Residents asked if the existing police cover was more at risk from funding cuts if the parish had paid for an extra PCSO. Mr Jenkins said that all decisions on staffing levels were made on a needs basis and according to risk levels.

It was confirmed that there is only funding for 20 PCSOs with the additional funding; once the funding for all 20 has been allocated, there would not be any more available.

PC Ian Kennedy also answered some questions on policing in Acle. In answer to one question he confirmed that he had never been sent to cover problems in Norwich, when on duty in Acle. Nor was he aware of any other members of the Acle Safer Neighbourhood Team being sent to work out of the Acle area.

In answer to another question Leigh Jenkins confirmed that the Constabulary had already carried out cost cutting reviews and continued to make savings, but that future funding of the police was uncertain.

Leigh Jenkins was thanked for attending the meeting. It was agreed to give the matter some consideration and put it on the agenda for the meeting on 26th January.

1. **RECREATION CENTRE**

Tony Hemmingway explained that the request for funding from the Recreation Centre had been put on the agenda to find out the public’s views on the funding of the Centre; should the Parish Council give no support to the Centre, or fund some capital assets of the Centre, and/or fund running costs of some assets?

Shane Tovell, Treasurer and Trustee, answered some of the questions from the public. He said that the Trustees had increased financial controls, the Finance Committee had carried out a rent review and recommended a substantial increase in fees. The Trustees regarded the Parish Council as a partner and wanted to increase the amount of dialogue between the two bodies. The Trustees were aware of the age of some of the assets and the need to put money aside to fund their repair or replacement. Therefore they needed to make greater surpluses in order to be able to put money into earmarked reserves.

Shane said that the accounts would be available at the AGM in March but he expected them to show a small loss which included the costs of the kitchen refurbishment but reduced by the VAT refund.

Shane said that a business plan was being worked on and should be available by the end of March. David Burnett said that he had put together a group of people who were prepared to produce the business plan, for free.

There was some discussion about the funding of open spaces such as the play area and skatepark.

Jackie Clover pointed out that Shane had put in a large number of hours, voluntarily, to work on the budget and rent review and she thanked him for that. She also said that any changes would be a gradual process.

It was noted that the Parish Council had previously said that it would require a business plan before deciding on a grant.

Comments from the public included whether a review of wages had been carried out, details of the costs of the open spaces, the drop in income from the changes to recycling glass and other grants which could be applied for. (It was noted that grants were not usually available for repairs but were usually for the initial purchase of assets.)

1. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Monday, 26th January 2015**

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 9.20 pm.

Signed:........................................... Dated:.........................................

 Chairman