

Brightwell, Foxhall & Purdis Farm Parish Council
Wednesday, 12th February 2014

Report of the Parish Clerk

The purpose of this report is to update members on outstanding issues, items received after the deadline for agenda items, correspondence and action taken by the Clerk.

Car Racing/Drifting Orwell Truck Stop

An email has been received from Nigel Hebden Planning Officer Suffolk Coastal District Council via Cllr Falconer as follows:

“I can confirm that the Council has received a number of complaints from local residents about this activity. Officers have been on site and the following notices have been served on the owner/operator of the Orwell Crossing site:

- A Planning Contravention Notice (PCN) which requires the owner to respond and confirm what activities are being carried out on the site as well as other information.
- A Temporary Stop Notice (TCN) which requires the owner to cease allowing the site to be used for the “drifting” activity for a period of 28 days.

Once we have a response to the PCN we will consider whether or not it is appropriate to serve an enforcement notice and if so what the enforcement notice will cover in respect of unauthorised development.”

Jubilee Tree and Plaque

The Jubilee Tree and Plaque will be placed in position within the next month.

Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014

This LAIS provides an overview of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 which received Royal assent on 30 January 2014. The Act contains important matters affecting not only local council external audit arrangements but also their information provision and meetings. Councils will be concerned to understand the changes being introduced and to avoid the costs and reputational risks that can arise for failures in relation to audits and accounts and allegations of lack of transparency and accountability. ***Although this LAIS contains important information, most of the matters contained in the Act require further implementing measures.***

It is anticipated that the National Association of Local Councils will provide detailed information on the financial matters and will be contributing to a revised Joint Practitioners Advisory Group guidance for local councils which will explain the arrangements and requirements underpinning audit and accountability requirements for local councils in order to safeguard public money. So, whilst local councils will be interested in the framework set up under the Act, they will be keen to see detailed regulation and guidance about how, for example, new localised external audit arrangements and their links to audit panels will work in practice. Your local Association will be supporting you with information about implementing the new regime and the underpinning guidance and regulatory framework as soon as it becomes available. Regulations made under the Act might modify the way in which the Act is applied to smaller authorities (most local councils). It is unlikely that new external audit arrangements will apply for 2014-15.

The Act applies to other local authorities and public service bodies but this LAIS only covers matters relating to local councils.

The main points affecting local councils in the Act are:

- 1) External audit arrangements for the future. Date of implementation to be determined by the Secretary of State.
- 2) A statutory Transparency Code applying to local councils will be published, requiring even smaller councils to publish certain information (currently only larger councils have to publish expenditure over £500). Date of implementation to be determined by the Secretary of State.
- 3) A statutory Code on Local Authority Publicity which will relate to local council newsletters and other publicity. This provision comes into effect 2 months from 30 January 2014 but councils will be waiting for an implementing direction and detail from the Secretary of State.
- 4) Filming and use of social media at council meetings will be permitted. This provision comes into effect 2 months from 30 January 2014 but councils will be waiting for the implementing regulations and legislative amendments to emerge from Government.
- 5) New regulations will be introduced covering parish polls. Date of implementation to be determined by the Secretary of State.
- 6) Changes are being made to take account of levies (but hopefully not local council precepts which have a separate referendum framework which the Secretary of State may invoke) for the purpose of determining whether council tax is 'excessive' for council tax referendums. In force from 30 January 2014.

Unless otherwise stated in the LAIS, the date that the provision comes into force is to be determined by the Secretary of State.

The question of whether councils can now move away from using two cheque signatories for payments, if they wish, has been taken through separate parliamentary processes. Although many councils do use alternative methods of payments, these will not be formal legal methods of payment until required safeguards for councils using alternative methods are published in guidance which it is anticipated will be within the next few months.

Precept Referendums – Notification Received from SALC

The following announcement has been provided from the National Association of Local Councils.

"The Government has not extended referendum principles to parish councils.

The key element of today's written ministerial statement by Local Government Minister Brandon Lewis MP on the final local government finance settlement 2014/2015 is below:

"We have not determined principles for local precepting authorities in 2014 to 2015, but we are putting on notice that we are prepared if necessary to apply the referendum thresholds to larger town and parish councils from 2015 to 2016 onwards to provide protection for local taxpayers and extend the principle of direct democracy."

The statement also reiterates the Minister's expectation council tax support funding is passed on to parish councils:

"We have also set out previously that there is some £3.3 billion in the settlement this year for Council Tax support schemes. There is an element within this national pot that is there specifically to reflect reductions in the parish tax base. We have not separately identified the money because it is not ring-fenced and as caseloads change and schemes evolve, the amount that different parishes need will change. It would be wrong to try to manage that centrally. But we have been clear that we expect billing authorities to carry on passing on support to town councils and parishes to help mitigate any reduction in their tax base due to the local Council Tax support scheme."

You can read the statement in full at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/final-local-government-finance-settlement-2014-to-2015>"

Grit Bin Kennels Road

I have received notification from Malcolm King Suffolk County Council Highways that he has approved the licence for the grit bin to be placed in Kennels Road has been approved. Highways have given approval for the bin to be placed at the top of Kennels Road for ease of spreading.

Community Enabling Fund

Suffolk Coastal has set up a new fund called the Community Enabling Budget and is giving each Ward Member £4,000 per annum to spend directly on NEW projects or community groups in the Nacton Ward.

This money is about helping and encouraging communities to organise and take responsibility for dealing with issues in parishes.

Parishes know what their needs are and how to come up with practical long-term solutions and by supporting them the community spirit can be continued.

The money is designed to be spent on projects that are consistent with the Council's Business Plan and Localism Strategy. **The money cannot be used to support existing services but it aimed at stimulating new community activity.**

<http://www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk/yourcouncil/enablingcommunities/communitybudgets/>.

Cllr O'Brien is asking that the Parish Council contact her as soon as possible but has divided her allocation between parishes; £450 2013/2014 and £900 2014/2015.

Cllr Falconer is asking that the Parish Council contact her as soon as possible if there is a **new** project need for funding in the parish either by the Parish Council or an organisation in the village. It is possible that her allocation of £2,000 for this year (2013/2014) will not be divided evenly between the 10 villages as she is aware that certain areas in the Ward have an urgent need for funding. This does not mean other Parishes will be forgotten as of next year (2014/2015) she will have £6,000 to distribute. She has already received one request as a resulting of a group approaching SCDC which has been directed to her.

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