

Brightwell, Foxhall & Purdis Farm Group Parish Council
Wednesday, 10th October 2012

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.

SALC Documents

LAIS Up2Date

Neighbourhood Planning

A £10 million fund is now available to help local planning authorities with neighbourhood planning. They are able to apply for grants of up to £30,000 for each scheme to help pay for the costs of getting plans in place. Payments will be paid to those authorities to help them support and advise groups taking forward neighbourhood plans and to pay towards the examination of plans and a local referendum. This might help planning authorities with their costs but local councils interested in neighbourhood planning will wish to consider how this will help them with their direct costs for progressing grass-roots driven neighbourhood plans, including with the independent advice they need to prevent plans becoming a principal authority led process

Gypsies & Travellers

Here in the useful publication, Dealing with Illegal and Unauthorised Encampments, is a comprehensive summary of available powers that can be used to aid the removal of illegal occupiers of land and property. Whilst the majority of these powers are vested in principal authorities or the Police, they can serve as an aid to local councils faced with unlawful occupation of their land or property.

Overgrown Vegetation Obstructing Signs

The Suffolk County Council website address for reporting overgrown vegetation which is obstructing signs is <https://www.csduk.com/CSD/Transportandstreets>

Email from Hilary Slater, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Suffolk Coastal District Council

As you will be aware, the elections for the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) are to be held on Thursday 15 November 2012.

The Notice of the Election will go up on 8 October 2012.

From 8 October to 15 November, we will be in what is commonly referred to as the pre-election period (PEP).

There are a couple of points which I would like to comment on which is relevant to the PEP, as follows:

1. Since the introduction of the new Standards regime, we have adopted the Suffolk Code, which states at paragraph 5 that Members must, amongst other things;

- a. when using or authorising the use by others of Council resources, ensure that such resources are not used improperly for political purposes (including party political purposes); and
 - b. (they) must have regard to any applicable Local Authority Code of Publicity made under the Local Government Act 1986.
2. The Government has issued a Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity. I include a link, below:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/coderecommended>

This gives some guidance about publicity in the PEP, at paragraph 43, and states that

"Particular care should be taken when publicity is issued immediately prior to an election or by-election affecting the authority's area to ensure that this could not be perceived as seeking to influence public opinion, or to promote the public image of a particular candidate, or group of candidates."

The reason I raise this is because I understand that you have been sent an email earlier this month from one of the prospective candidates for the PCC election, Jane Basham, the Labour candidate. It appears that she has sent all town and parish councils election material for display and / or distribution.

I have taken advice from the Electoral Commission and from Stephen Baker, the Police Area Returning Officer (PARO) for the PCC election on this issue. They have advised that I contact you to give a reminder about the importance of political neutrality. This is clear from both the Suffolk Code and the Code of recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity. Whilst a candidate can lobby whomsoever they wish, there are potential standards issues if a Parish council is seen to be promoting a particular candidate.

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