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Minutes of the **BLAKENEY ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2016** which was held on **Thursday 17th March 2016** at 7pm in Blakeney Village Hall.

Present:- Tony Faulkner (Chairman of Blakeney Parish Council).

Clerk:- Tracey Bayfield.

Public:- Jenny Girling (Vice-Chairman of Blakeney Parish Council), Wendy Faulkner, Roland Goodison, Rob Dunster, Vicky Forrest, Peter Rose, Jane Armstrong, Alistair Lindop, Tim Bent, Jill Tibbbetts, Melody Beeley, Gaye Withers, R Tutt, Jess Tutt, Lal Wright, Maggie Prior, Andrew Glossop, Barry Girling, Mike Girling, Paul Bedford, Andrew Cooke, Hilary Daley, Richard Daley, Glenn Aikens, Kevin Aikens, Trevor Leach, Mick Scargill, Edward Allen, Gill Hackford, Margaret Benson, Tom Benson, Mandy Lewis, Anna Carter, Anne Maw, Anton Elliott, Brian Harris, Hazel Harris, Mike Strong, Marie Strong, Rosemary Thew & Edward Hackford.

Attendees:- Total 44 – 28 on the Electoral Roll for Blakeney.

1. **Welcome by the Chairman** - Mr Tony Faulkner welcomed all those present and thanked everyone for coming. Apologies for **Absence** were received from Parish Councillors; Roger Hall, Alban Donohoe & Samantha Arlow, Andrew Wells (District Cllr), John Seymour, Pam and John Peake, Lilian Timms & all of The Methodist Chapel representatives and Judy Pegden.
2. *It was **proposed & agreed** that the **Minutes** of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Thursday 19th March 2015 are to be signed as a true record.*
3. **Guest Speaker(s) –**
 - **WELLS POLICE – PCSO Sarah Kirby** – Advised that looking back during the past 12 months, there were 12 crimes recorded for Blakeney. 5 thefts and 3 burglaries. At the moment, the public are asked to be alert as locally the area has suffered a number of house burglaries. Please note any vehicle registration number down if you have the slightest concern, as we would rather check something out as a precaution if need be. Also just a reminder that 999 is for an emergency situation ie. if an incident is happening, but if it has already happened and is to be reported after the event, then the number is 101. You can always ask to be put through to the Wells Police Station and you can leave a message and we will get back to you, should you wish to speak to us. This is the time of year to remind boat owners not to leave outboards and belongings on boats, as they are easy targets for thieves.
 - **CITIZENS ADVICE – Mandy Lewis** (Bureau manager, Mid Norfolk) explained the work undertaken.

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The Citizens Advice Service provides free independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities. It values diversity, promotes equality and challenges discrimination. In recent research into public perceptions of major charities Citizens Advice was ranked first on seven attributes, being regarded as the most honest, helpful, accountable, approachable, effective, informative and fair and is the 2015 winner of the charity times awards.

As the UK's largest advice provider we are equipped to deal with any issue, from anyone. In fact nearly half of the population has used the service at some point in their lives. 95% of people asked have heard of Citizens Advice, which is better even than Marmite.

We have a fantastic information system www.citizensadvice.org.uk and it is available to the public – please check it out as it is amazing about the level of information that is there. In house we also have access to a system we call Advisernet which has far more detail that allows us to give in depth advice to clients.

There are currently 3 Citizens Advice services operating in Norfolk (reduced by various mergers from 15)

Citizens Advice Mid Norfolk was set up more than 30 years ago and has offices in the towns of Dereham, Watton & Holt and outreach sessions in Swaffham, Sheringham, Melton Constable and Wayland Prison. We recently identified extra need in Sheringham and now offer a second outreach service at the town foodbank. It became clear that many of the people attending the foodbank have additional needs around housing, benefits employment and debt issues.

You might be interested to know that there has been a huge increase in people accessing food banks over the last eight years. The Trussell Trust, a national charity co-ordinating foodbanks across the country has figures showing that in **2008-9 25,899** food vouchers were issued. In **2014-2015 1,084,604** vouchers were issued. Benefit delays, benefit changes & low income are the main reasons people are referred to foodbanks. Each voucher entitles the recipient to 3 days of emergency food. These numbers represent the numbers of people receiving food parcels, not necessarily unique numbers. On average people receive 2 food parcels a year but some people can receive considerably more.

All of the services we deliver are provided by volunteers from our local communities and there are various jobs that they cover. We have volunteers who cover our reception area, volunteers who are trained to assess a situation and give relevant guidance and information using our public access website and then refer clients to relevant partner agencies such as Shelter for specialist housing advice, or ACAS for specialist employment advice.

We also have others who train to be full advisers who are able to give in depth advice and support across all of the advice areas we cover. Any of these who want to may go on to specialise in certain areas and take on long term casework for clients. Advisers also give advice by telephone and as part of a virtual call centre operated with the other Citizens Advice offices in Norfolk.

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Each advice session is led by a supervisor who is available to the advisers for support and extra guidance. We record all of the advice and information we give to clients on a confidential data base, with the permission of course of the client. All of the advice we give is checked daily by the supervisor to maintain the quality of the advice we give and also to ensure that the clients receive the best service available. On a monthly basis I will also audit the quality of the advice given to a selection of the notes created.

The Citizens advice Service provides a huge amount of support to the local community. Calculations have been done which show that the cost of our service to the community, if it were to be charged, for would be in the region of £250,000 a year. This is a conservative estimate.

Approximately 75% of the work done across Citizens Advice is in respect of debt, benefits, employment issues, relationship and family breakdown. In the current economic climate I don't see this changing.

As part of our work we check whether people have entitlement to benefits. Take up of benefits by people can make a considerable contribution to improving the financial situation of a family, reducing deprivation and poverty. The additional income will assist these families to address possible debt issues and thereby easing strain on the family.

For instance we saw a client with physical disabilities who was totally unaware of her possible eligibility for disability benefits, now known as PIP (personal independence payments) who was becoming virtually housebound due to difficulties walking any distance. She also needed help to wash and dress and to prepare food and help with going to the bathroom day and night. The only support she was receiving was from her husband who had given up work to look after her. They were living on savings which were fast running out. We successfully assisted her to claim benefits which meant that they were able to pay for new clothes – she had lost a large amount of weight as part of her illness – buy some new furniture to help ease problems in moving around the home and buy a wheelchair so that she could go out with her husband. This made a huge difference to the quality of their lives. We also put them in touch with agencies specific to her condition which were able to offer ongoing support to them. We were also able to help the family claim benefits to help with rent and council tax payments which eased their situation considerably.

Although the majority of our work is concerned with benefits, debt and housing etc we can also be called upon to answer questions about just about anything. In the past I have been asked how to find a holiday home for a python and on another occasion a rescue service for parrots (which we managed) and even been asked to write a "Dear John" letter for someone who wanted to dump his girlfriend (we didn't do this).

We often deal with consumer issues and our website has lots of information about people's rights when goods are faulty for example. People are often surprised that there is no automatic right to change your mind about something you have bought or returning a present you don't like! Sometimes we hear the most ridiculous excuses

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from shops and other traders. Once we had a client who bought a new carpet for her stairs which wore out within a couple of months only to be told her husband was wearing the wrong shoes!!

I've even been asked by people for advice on how to prove that they aren't dead and also for help to trace a person who is dead. You name it and we have probably seen or done it !!

As to the future, Citizens Advice is determined to continue to offer an open efficient service by as many means as possible.

Citizens Advice Mid Norfolk continues to be part of the Norfolk virtual telephone call centre offering a county wide coverage throughout the week. Ultimately this will become a national virtual call centre, similar to the national Consumer helpline offered by Citizens advice in conjunction with Trading Standards.

We work closely with other Citizens Advice offices and partner agencies such as Shelter and ACAS to deliver an integrated service and we continue to supply evidence to our national association which they use to influence local and central government policies as we firmly believe that prevention is better than cure.

- **THE SHERINGHAM & CROMER LIONS CLUB** – Brian Harris will give us an insight into how this group works to help local communities and in particular their 'Message in a Bottle'.

Sheringham & Cromer Lions Club, like many other Clubs are a small part of Lions Clubs International, which is a secular, non political service organisation started in 1917 by Chicago business man. Lions Clubs International can currently be found in over 200 countries around the World - there are over 46,000 clubs with a membership of over 1,400,00 men and women. All monies donated to our club go to the various causes and charities we support, no part of the monies donated goes to our administration costs - these amounts are self funded by club members. The purpose and motto of Lions Clubs is "WE SERVE".

Major Lions Clubs achievements that you may be familiar with are:-

- Our work in helping people who are blind or visually impaired, we were responsible for the introduction in 1925 of the White Stick. We along with other Lions Clubs collect used spectacles which are then sent around the world to less fortunate people matching their sight abilities with the donated spectacles.
- In 1990 Lions Clubs International launched the "SIGHT FIRST" initiative - to restore sight (where possible) and to attempt to prevent blindness - on a global scale - targeting major causes of blindness such as cataract, trachoma, river blindness, diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma. Since 1990 Lions Clubs International have raised over US\$ 346,000,000 for this initiative.

Lions Clubs International were also instrumental in the introduction of our

“MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE” which my colleague Lions Arthur Bailey will now talk to you about.

I am going to tell you briefly about a scheme that in my opinion is one of the best initiatives ever that could help to save your life. It's called “MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE”. What is it? Well it is simply a little white pot with a green logo on it. It does not look much but as I have said it could save your life. How does it work? Well let me explain.

The small plastic container has printed form inside where you put your name and all your medical conditions and what medication you are taking. The bottle also contains 2 small green stickers. Once the form is completed you put the form in the plastic bottle and place it in the fridge or a cupboard and put one of the little green stickers on the outside of the fridge or cupboard door. Then place the other green sticker inside your entrance door. If you need an ambulance or paramedic, they will look for the green stickers and then they can tell straight away what your illnesses are and what medication you take. These details can save a lot of time and can result in saving your life. It is imperative that the forms are kept up to date if you change medication etc.

You may be asking yourselves how much does it cost well I can tell you that we supply them “**free of charge**”. So if you are suffering from a constant illness or you have to take regular medication, you can request a “Message in a Bottle” either from a member of the Lions Club or from your local GP.

Should you need a “**Message in a Bottle**” or more information about Lions please contact Lion Brian Harris 01263 821276 or email brihaz@btinternet.com

- ***DREDGING PROPOSALS FOR THE BLAKENEY CUT/CHANNEL –***
Members of the Joint Management Group of The Dinghy Park (which is made up of representatives from the Blakeney Sailing Club, Blakeney Parish Council and the Public, with representation from The National Trust) had the proposal map on show throughout the evening, and spoke to individuals who had questions as they came in. The Chairman of the Committee, read the following report which had been written by David Woodcock, the previous Chairman. Tony Faulkner added some additional information.

The project to investigate the dredging of a 200m stretch of The Cut from the Sailing Club slipway taking an improved channel to a point north of Bridge Creek has been in discussion for quite some time now, indeed at least a couple of years by the members of the ‘Joint Management Group of the Dinghy Park Committee’.

Preliminary surveys had shown that the channel at this point was getting narrower and more importantly moving westwards. Some may recall the last time The Cut was dredged in 1986 a committee, led by Godfrey Sayers organised the work which covered the full length of the channel from the Carnser to the Cooke posts at the northern end of the cut. At the time, The Committee also commissioned a report

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from 'Binnie & Partners', who are Civil Engineering Consultants, on the causes and future management of The Cut.

The fundamental issue was and still is, that the tides bring in more sand and silt than the ebb removes. Following a grant from the Sheringham Shoal Fund the current Committee were able to appoint consultants to look at the project and advise on the environmental issues that would need to be overcome. If the Committee had fully absorbed the minefield they were entering, it might have caused a few more grey hairs!

The grant enabled us to investigate the approvals required:-

- Marine Management Organisation
- Environment Agency
- Natural England
- North Norfolk District Council
- Crown Estate Commissioners

The National Trust were also heavily involved both as Landowners above Mean High water and broad supporters of the project.

There was considerable debate as to whether the Committee should seek to widen the existing channel or straighten it to improve the tidal scour and the Consultants advice was to try and straighten the channel. It was thought that there would be about 7000 cu metres of spoil to get rid off and this caused considerable debate but the best alternative was to spread it at the east end of the pit between the Cley and Blakeney channels.

We also needed a detailed survey and that was obtained last autumn, the survey plans are displayed here in the hall this evening, and the line of the proposed new dredge marked. The plan is that the base of the channel should be 17m wide with a 1 in 5 bank slope.

All the work to date, including such things as channel sediment analysis, reports from DLEnviro (one being 64 pages) and The Landscape Partnership and the survey from Randall Surveys have all been undertaken with the cost being met from the grant we received.

As you may be aware a public consultation questionnaire is currently open for all to complete and we would urge everyone to complete a copy and to share their thoughts with us. It is entitled, 'Saving the Blakeney Channel', and has been printed in the pages of The Glaven Valley News, and has been emailed to various organisation members, as well as on the Parish Council website etc. The deadline for responses is Thursday 31st March. (Copies are also available here this evening.) The replies will then be collated and the findings shared with the members of the Joint Management Group of the Dinghy Park Committee.

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The feedback will then be taken into consideration, and subject to this, the next step is to start obtaining the relevant consents starting with an application for Planning Permission which in itself will lead to the agreement of the other parties involved. To achieve this further funding will be required which the Committee are currently considering by way of grant applications.

One differing factor to the last time this work was undertaken is that on this occasion the Committee feel that provision should be made for ongoing maintenance work and that perhaps a contribution might be sought from boat owners moored in The Cut and on the dinghy park plus a number of other sources, all of which will be considered once the results of the public consultation are known.

Q. Are there any plans to block the Bridge Creek flow?

A. No. We know that Bridge Creek discharges into the outgoing flow and it is part of the solution to turn the discharge more inline with the outflow. We would like to get the Environment Agency to help with this and we are looking into it.

Q. Aylmerton Field Study Centre are worried about the spoil going between the Cut and Cley Channel as this is where we walk about 3,500 children out each year to the point.

A. The area we have in mind for placing the spoil should not compromise the walk out, and when laid it will be about 300mm deep and flat, hence it really should not be a problem, as the flow over this area is very low as it's not in the fast flow channels.

Q. Would the spoil have any impact on the Cley works?

A. No, as the main rush is on the creeks and flat bit.

- **NORFOLK COUNTY COUNCILLOR** – Dr. Marie Strong.

Unless you have sat as a parish councillor you will not fully appreciate what is entailed. It means making your personal financial details available to the public; saying yes to planning applications which you dislike but which according to regulations are legitimate; it means not having a vote on plans which can adversely affect your own property. Yet planning is just a small part of the role and if you are the Chairman there are commitments which take not hours in a month but in a week.

As to the Parish Council Clerk there is the additional title of Responsible Officer. This means the Clerk must ensure all procedures and processes in every aspect of the council are carried out according to law. Few people are willing to take on that role and there are vacancies across the county.

The Councillors, Chair and Clerk for Blakeney all hold my respect.

What has happened in this last year:

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Fibre broadband came to Blakeney and whilst there are still areas across Norfolk to be covered the county is ahead of all other counties involved in the BDUK (Broadband Delivery for the UK); we have completed the first contract ahead of time and under budget – the remaining money of which will go to the next contract

Whilst fibre broadband has taken considerable time and effort at least there was money available for which the county could apply – and did so successfully. This has not been the case for mobile phone provision. Here the operators agreed with the government that they would set aside money to improve provision. And there has been progress, a major step being that by the end of 2017 there will be 90% coverage across the country.

However we still have to endeavour to cover the remaining 10% which includes 'not spots'. ('Not spots' being places where not even an emergency signal can be made and on behalf of the Government were verified by Ofcom - the Office of Communications being the government-approved regulatory and competition authority for the broadcasting, telecommunications and postal industries of the United Kingdom.) The government Minister involved in communications is extremely keen for the 'not spots' to be eliminated but as yet there is no resolution following ending of the government MIP project (mobile infrastructure project).

On the positive side provision of DAB (Digital Audio Broadcasting) has progressed. The GVN will have considerable detail including access to a map as to reception across Norfolk County Council

4. PARISH COUNCIL COMMUNITY FUND – (Each group will be presented with a grant from the fund) Group presentation & brief reports;

Blakeney History Centre – Pam & John Peake (the report was read in their absence.) A grant of £480 was awarded.

The History Centre Blakeney would like to thank the Blakeney Parish Council for their support of our World War One Project commemorating all casualties and survivors alike.

Work is currently underway to celebrate the role of the Royal Navy, particularly relevant in this centenary year of the Battle of Jutland. A new exhibition will shortly be on display in the Parish Church.

Then, just as we thought nothing more could be found out about our casualties, the true identity of H Daniel was made possible by the chance discovery of "Harry Daniel" listed as a farm hand at Manor Farm (now the Manor Hotel) just as the Calthorpe estate was being wound up for the sale in 1911. His story will be published in the Glaven Valley Newsletter later this year.

Thank you for the Community Grant.

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Blakeney Scout Group Executive Council – Jess Tutt received a grant of £480. This money will be used to replace the gable end of the Scout Hut as the wood is rotten and water is seeping in, thank you.

Blakeney & District Scout Group – Jess Tutt received a grant of £280. Thank you. This money will go towards the Cub 100 celebrations and 30 year Beaver celebrations, camps and days out.

Coastal Rowing Association Blakeney – Rob Dunster received a grant of £150. Thank you to Blakeney Parish Council. We need to maintain our safety equipment so that we can continue to row safely in Blakeney pit. Specifically, we need to service our lifejackets so that non members can boat safely. Amongst many users are the Holt Youth Project rowers, that use these vital pieces of equipment when they row with us, and in order to comply with regulations we need to have them serviced (£15 each x 10 lifejackets). In the meantime we are saving hard for our next boat to add to Blakeney's thriving coastal scene.

Blakeney Royal British Legion Bowls Club – Mick Scargill received a grant of £480. The grant will be used to maintain the high standard of green which we have now become accustomed to here in Blakeney, mostly thanks to the Parish Council Community Fund. The playing area is admired by all who see and compete on the green. *(Mick gave an extremely wonderful account of having to now, after 38 years, yes he started back in 1978, attend a 'health & safety' 2 day course, on how to tend for the green, and in his own words, 'without killing myself'. He feels that H&S have now declared war on the bowling greens, having been everywhere else.....* Those of us present, know that the green is only as good as it is, due to the years of hard work and dedication of Mick, who tends to it 4 days a week.

Blakeney Village Hall Trust – Jill Tibbetts received a grant of £580. On behalf of the Blakeney Village Hall Trust, I would like to thank you for your support. We are continually working to keep the hall up to date, equipped and available as a great place for members of the community to get together. Sport, drama and social activities. Most recently with the installation of the new projector and screen and we have just completed the first stage in an ongoing effort to refurbish the kitchen. Other things on the wish list include new tables and chairs and refurbishing toilets. We now run a film night on the third Friday of the months. Tomorrow is The Lady in The Van. I would also like to take the opportunity to thank all those who give up their time, whether minutes or hours to help make the village hall available to all. We are always looking for more volunteers!

St. Nicholas Church – Tim Bent received a grant of £1,230. We thank Blakeney Parish Council for this very generous grant. During the course of 2015 the church has faced very large bills for repair and maintenance. It has stood for hundreds of years and the years have taken their toll to the extent that urgent repairs have been required to the windows, (which were in danger of falling in) stonework and the roof. During 2015 over £100k was spent on this work badly depleting the church reserves.

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Blakeney Football Club – Andrew Cooke received a grant of £380. Thanks for helping the club to move forward and together with the £250 raised a few weeks ago with a music event, which went very well, this will help us to purchase 2 x five a side goals @ £200, new socks £100 and 2 match balls £60. The club has been going for 60 years and I am the 5th generation of my own family to be involved in the club. The remaining funds will be held to help with another project which is to purchase some portable flood lights, which may also be of use to the other clubs in the community. The flood lights will enable winter training on grass. This facility also will draw more players and hopefully less injuries.

Holt Area Patients Participation Group – Maggie Prior received a grant of £200. Thank you very much for this most generous grant. As you will know Holt Medical Practice also encompasses the surgeries at Blakeney and Melton Constable, so we cover a very wide area. At the moment we serve 14,000 patients. Your contribution will be of great help as our main role is to enable communication. We do this in many ways. We produce a monthly press release and two newsletters per year, again given to as many local press outlets as are able to reproduce this for us. We also need to communicate with individual patients on a very wide range of topics and your money is particularly useful for the cost of postage for this.

We produce projects at the Practice to either practically assist, therefore saving a member of staff being needed, or to get a particular message across. Just to finish by giving you a couple of examples; we produced a rota for three weeks when the Practice introduced its self-booking-in machine and each day helped all the patients book in to avoid long queues or just to immediately book in at any time. This is now very well used. I have to admit to still asking people if they'd like to book in if I walk in to see several people waiting, much to the surprise of the people waiting as I have no working role at Holt Medical Practice.

Lastly, I'm sure you heard about our baths – yes, two full size baths. HAPPG was the first Patients Participation Group to illustrate the huge loss of money caused by drug wastage. Our baths are now travelling around many other surgeries in Norfolk and have been recognised by the Clinical Commissioning Group.

*A grant was also given to **The Recreation Committee** (£1,230) for the BMX project, which is due to be installed within the next few weeks. (The Chairman will touch on this in his report.)*

Blakeney Youth Group Report - £330 Grant. (*Under the umbrella of The Methodist Church.*)

The youth group is a very new venture and at present we meet once a month. We have a small core of young people, who we've enjoyed getting to know a little better over the last 3 months. In time we hope that the group will grow in numbers and that the young people themselves will invite their friends.

We offer a safe space for the youngsters to come and engage with us and each other, through games, talks, discussion and above all hot chocolate! We have also

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had the opportunity to take 2 of the young people to a combined youth event held in Sheringham and hosted by Youth for Christ.

We are so delighted with the amount that the community fund has allocated to us, it's so much more than we could have hoped for. It's our plan to be able to take the young people to different things, for example this month we're going to go ten pin bowling. The money will also enable us to purchase some equipment for our regular meetings, which will be great.

If you would like to find out more about the youth group please do feel free to contact me, Debbie Davison 01263 861699/07983179387 or debbiecafetmc@aol.com

Café TMC Report - £280 Grant. *(The Methodist Church.)*

I'm guessing many of you will already know about Café TMC and more importantly tasted our great cakes (all calorie free when consumed on church premises!) Now about to embark on our 5th year of being open, we're a café with a difference. We offer a warm welcome, good coffee, great cakes and sandwiches and the opportunity for conversation. It's a lovely place to arrange to meet with your friends but more than that, it's a great place to come and make new friends. It's a place to relax and unwind and to share in the café's atmosphere where there's always plenty of laughter.

Last year we had in excess of 3,500 people through our doors and we look forward to seeing what this year brings.

The generous donation from the community fund is wonderful, as we have so many plans as to ways in which we can become even more part of the lovely community of Blakeney.

If you would like to find out more about Café TMC and maybe even come and join our happy band of volunteers, do feel free to contact me, Debbie Davison 01263 861699/07983179387 or debbiecafetmc@aol.com

5. OTHER COMMUNITY GROUP REPORTS:-

Blakeney Neighbourhood Housing Society – Written by John Seymour and in his absence read by Lal Wright.

Last year I wrote a long report outlining what the Society stood for and its aims and objectives, this report still stands. During the course of last year we carried out the usual cyclical painting, boiler servicing and chimney sweeping. In addition gutters were cleaned and checked and this job will become an annual activity going forward. Inevitably repairs to windows, doors, gutters and heating systems arise from these activities and we endeavour to have these completed during the same overall timescale. We have re-roofed four houses this year plus numerous other improvements. The refurbishment planned for 2015 did not take place for a number

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of reasons mainly associated with the complexities of listed building consent. We hope it will start relatively soon.

Several cottages have electric central heating and it does appear, at last, that an 18 hour a day reduced rate tariff is available to help offset the higher running costs. We will be working with the tenants during the year to get the new meters installed so they are up and running by next winter.

We have had a few problems with our main contractor this year due to overloading and absence due to illness. Having discussed the issues they have reassessed the procedures for the team working on BNHS cottages so as to ensure we receive the service we expect. Time will tell if it is successful.

I have had some very interesting meetings with North Norfolk District Council and Local Housing Associations and there is the possibility that an opportunity for new housing somewhere in our area may arise. As soon as anything positive happens I will report back.

At any one time we have about 18 names on the waiting list and we are aware that North Norfolk District Council has many more applicants on their Housing List with strong local connections. There has been a shift to mainly singles and couples without children and when we do have a vacancy there is often the dilemma of a three bedroom house becoming available but with a single person at the top of the list. In the short to medium term this situation is unlikely to change.

Eight years ago we embarked on a policy to align rents with those of a range of local Housing Associations. We did not have enough income from rents to carry out the repairs we needed to do and although it is not a policy to charge higher than affordable levels we have to acknowledge that the majority of our cottages are old, difficult to access and not very well built, with damp being a major issue. Many have listed status, which brings its own set of problems, for example installing double glazing is an uphill struggle with the planners. The rental policy is continuing and now over 50% of the houses are now aligned. Future rent increases for those properties are linked to cost of living rises.

At the 31st December 2015 there were 86 shareholders. We have a very active committee and I am grateful to them all for their help and guidance.

Blakeney Parish Council - Report for the past year by Mr Tony Faulkner (Chairman).

This year, rather than formally listing our activities during the year, and what we hope to achieve in the next, I thought I would write a more general report about the Parish Council and how it operates.

As a result of the **election** last year we have two new councillors, Neil Thomson and Samantha Arlow. Both have strong family and local connections and we welcome the extra knowledge and expertise they contribute.

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Although we officially have 11 monthly meetings during the year, excluding August, for the last two years we have had to meet in August to deal with planning applications - no rest for the wicked! In addition some of us attend outside meetings that might have an impact on the parish, particularly those concerning planning, affordable housing and coastal matters. The Government has still not decided whether the dreaded 'Reference Areas', now called 'Highly Protected Marine Areas', are required and so we continue to keep a watching brief.

On **affordable housing** we are keen to do what we can to increase its availability in the parish and one of the most exciting projects we now have in hand is the building on the War Memorial Cottages site of one, two or three new units, the number depending on what is practically possible and what can achieve planning permission. These will be units belonging to the parish and let under its control.

Your councillors are also members of some six committees and four trusts that meet at intervals to deal with specific issues such as finance, personnel, Dinghy Park management, the Bonfire and Fireworks event, recreation, management of The Pastures and the War Memorial Cottages. You will see from this that there is plenty to keep us busy and I want to put on record my heartfelt thanks to all members of the Council for the tremendous amount of time and energy that they put into looking after the interests of the village.

On **recreation**, the company building the **BMX track** is coming after Easter to inspect the ground conditions and, if suitable, will then proceed with its construction. I am sorry that we have had to wait so long for completion of this project, due to reasons beyond our control, but it should now be finished in time for our summer visitors.

You have already heard about the **Dinghy Park** and the proposal to dig out and partially straighten the narrow part of the channel that is causing problems just to the north of the park. We genuinely wish to know parishioners' views on this and should be grateful if you would complete the questionnaire in the Glaven Valley Newsletter or available at this meeting.

The **replacement posts** along the main Quay have nearly been completed but there are some additional brackets to be fitted to the top of the concrete edge beam to give additional strength. The 2013 flood showed the previously fitted post to be inadequate in strength and so these have been replaced with far stronger ones similar to those used on the wooden quay in front of the Red House. This work has been 50% funded by Norfolk County Council as part of the Partnership Funding Scheme as have the oak posts to stop parking on the verge of the road at the bottom of Back Lane. We submit bids in this scheme whenever possible to reduce the cost to the parish.

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Other projects carried out during the year have been the purchase of a second marquee for the bonfire and fireworks event, creation of an extra store in the old bus shelter to house the salt spreader, dealing with the issue of the proposed mobile phone mast and obtaining a licence from Norfolk County Council for the use of the school playing field site on Langham Road for occasional parking, particularly for the rural sports event.

For the next year our main projects are the affordable housing on the War Memorial Cottages site and moving the dredging project on to the next stage subject, of course, to the response to the questionnaire. We shall also be looking into whether there are any public footpaths not yet registered and will still try to achieve the short length of footpath needed for safety where the footpath crosses the coast road at the brow of the hill on Morston Road. This has been supported by County Highways in principal but there are questions of land ownership still to be resolved.

I should like again to express my thanks to all your parish councillors for their help and support and to give a big 'thank you' to Tracey, your Clerk, who works tirelessly for the Council, giving up much of her 'home' time to attend our meetings and whose expert knowledge and experience is of such value to the Council, and particularly to me! In addition, I should like to express the thanks of all our Council to Marie Strong, our county councillor and Andrew Wells, our district councillor, who both attend almost all of our regular meetings and help us in many different ways. Knowing how many parishes they represent we are very lucky to have this degree of support.

I also thank all of you who run, or help to run, village activities. We are a remarkable village for the number of interest groups that exist, the sense of goodwill within the village and the support that we give to each other in so many different ways. I wouldn't wish to live anywhere else.

6. **OVER TO YOU; OPEN SESSION**:- A chance for those present to comment on any items already discussed. There being no further questions or comments, the Chairman closed the meeting.

Items left on tables and clearly marked at the back of the hall were: Public Consultation: Proposed Dredging Questionnaires and the Accounting Statement 2014/15, which the public were welcome to take away.

Meeting closed at 8.45pm.

Chairman _____