

Minutes of Kingston Annual Parish Meeting held at 8.00pm on 19 May 2011 in the Village Hall

Present:

Simon Draper, Chairman of Kingston Parish Council
Julie Conder, Katherine Stalham, James Clear; Kingston Parish Councillors
Tumi Hamkins; South Cambs District Councillor
Peter Stokes; Clerk to Kingston Parish Council

Members of the public: Janet Clear, Annabel Diggle, Jack Diggle, Pat Draper, Irene Heyman, Janet Lau, Ian McMillan, Melanie Owers, Paul Owers, Charlie Richmond, Linda Rimmer, Torrie Smith, Katherine Stalham, Suzanne Stokes, Mike Warren, Paul Wright.

The following reports were presented. Where relevant, a brief description of the discussion which followed each report is given at the end of that report.

1. Chairman's Report – Simon Draper, Chairman of KPC

The Parish Council meets every two months. Anyone can attend these meetings as an observer. However this evening's meeting is not a Parish Council meeting but a public opportunity for everyone to air their views.

Kingston Parish Councillors

Simon Draper (Chairman)
Tim Fitzjohn (Vice Chairman and Footpaths)
Julie Conder (Finance; webmaster)
Katherine Stalham (Representative on Village Hall MC)
James Clear

I have agreed to continue as Chairman this year but will hand over to a successor in 2012.

Peter Stokes, is the Clerk to the Parish Council.

Most of our meetings are also attended by representatives from the South Cambs District Council and the Cambridgeshire County Council:

Tumi Hawkins, SCDC
Fiona Whelan, CCC

1. Setting the precept

This determines the amount of tax paid by householders. At the January meeting, with some nervousness that the CCC and SCDC might pass on budgetary cuts it was agreed to increase the precept for 2011/2012 to £7048. Taking into account the increase in the estimated equivalent number of Band D houses in Kingston (3.33%) this will result in each household having an RPI-based inflationary increase of 4.7%. Subsequently we learned of funding cutbacks for grass-cutting and lighting hence our suspicions were justified.

Once again in setting the precept we have to keep an eye on any anticipated future one-off items such as repairs to the Village Hall. The *Village Hall Management Committee* (VHMC) has the responsibility of managing any necessary maintenance and seeking extra grants but obviously access to funds is difficult. We are aware that repairs will be needed in the foreseeable future. In principle we have agreed to help within the limits of our budget but before any payments are made we will require a *Maintenance Plan* setting out what needs doing over the next five years. *The Village Hall Management Committee* has agreed to prepare the plan.

2. Upgrading the Village Hall

The Parish Council is keen to see improvements made to the Village Hall and at a meeting with the Chairman of the VHMC agreed as follows:

- The interior of the Hall is dated in appearance and does not match expectations for public buildings in the 21st Century. Further there are some very specific issues which need attention
- The work needs to be undertaken in phases to allow some immediate improvements, while recognising that longer term the overall objectives will take time, and money, to achieve.
- The Village Hall Management Committee will develop an overall plan and 'way forward'. This will include immediate upgrades to the interior of the Main Hall and a longer term plan for the whole building.

While full renovation will need grant-funding the Parish Council may be able to provide some limited support from reserves for immediate improvements to make the main room more attractive for social events.

3. Community Plan

Parish Councils are now being encouraged to prepare a Community Plan. Such plans carry weight with the planning authorities and hence offer an opportunity for local people to shape their own environment. Tim Fitzjohn has agreed to initiate the process for Kingston but once a planning group has been established it will manage its own affairs and report back to the Parish Council. Around six people are needed to form the group and volunteers are invited to contact the Parish Council.

4. Allotments

We have negotiated a lease arrangement for Kingston to acquire from SCDC management control of the allotments in Crane's Lane. This should allow us to improve the use and standard of care of the land.

5. Communications

The village web site has proved popular and improvements have been made. A Facebook page has also been launched within the last few days. Thanks are due to Julie Conder who has undertaken this work.

6. Recreation ground

The new facilities were opened in the summer of 2010 with a special event. Since then further improvements have been made with additional play facilities and some reseeded and tree planting.

7. Buses

There is a serious threat to bus services for Kingston and already cuts have been announced. We understand that all subsidies are to be withdrawn within four years. Representations on this issue can be made to the Parish Council or directly to Tumi Hawkins, the SCDC Councillor for our region, who is taking a very active part in seeking solutions.

8. Acknowledgements

Finally, I should like to thank everyone who has helped with the work of the Parish Council including of course all Parish Councillors, Fiona Whelan (County Councillor), Tumi Hawkins (District Councillor) and Peter Stokes who provides excellent support for all our meetings and for actions that fall due between meetings.

2. Financial Report – Peter Stokes, Parish Clerk

(N.B.: all amounts are net of VAT as this is reclaimed)

2009/2010		2010/2011
£		£
INCOME		
6384.00	Precept	6515.00
349.91	Grasscutting	399.91
0.00	Rebate from Kingston Oil Club	40.00
10.59	Interest on deposit account	17.99
25200.00	Play Pathfinder grant	530.00
31944.50	Total	7502.90

EXPENDITURE		
515.33	Insurance	722.68
120.00	Audit fees	343.00
2071.20	Grass and hedge cutting (contract)	2077.44
957.00	Clerk's salary	959.87
240.65	Footpath lighting	323.30
146.08	Subscriptions	153.17
570.00	Grants	686.00
123.87	Asset maintenance	1791.36
212.31	Parish magazine	0.00
328.27	Miscellaneous	303.27
675.00	Play Pathfinder expenditure	25055.00
5959.71	Total	32415.09

25984.79	INCOME minus EXPENDITURE	-24912.19
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BANK BALANCE AT 31 Mar		
34049.07	Total after adjustment for VAT reclaim (see note 1)	9136.88
Change last year to this year (see note 2)		-24912.19

Notes:

- 1 Some VAT has already been reclaimed. The balance of VAT will be reclaimed in 2011/12. Bank balances have been adjusted to include the VAT not yet reclaimed.
- 2 The bank balance has now returned to a more normal level since the Play Pathfinder funding has now all been spent.

I will now highlight a few items from the financial summary above.

1. Grass and Hedgecutting

Stuart Buchan has provided satisfactory performance and they are again our contractors this year. The County Council contribution for grass cutting of verges for 2010/11 was £350, the same as last year.

Please let me know of any problems with grasscutting in the village.

2. Grants

Grants were made of £586 to Kingston Parish Church for graveyard maintenance, and £100 to the Village Hall Management Committee for the alcohol licence.

3. Insurance

The insurance premium for the year 2010/11 was £657 and the premium for the current year is £744. These are higher than previous years due to the increase in value of insured assets arising through the new playground equipment.

4. Playground

Grant expenditure on the playground is now complete – the grant of a little over £25,000 has all been spent on improving the playground, so this has been at no cost to residents of Kingston. Maintenance of the facilities remains the responsibility of the Parish Council, and there has been some expenditure during the year on this.

We have a programme of regular inspections to make sure the equipment and other facilities, including fences, gates etc, remain safe for the children who use it. If anybody is visiting the playground and notices a problem, please let me know.

5. Bank Balances

Our total bank balances at the end of the year stood at £9136. This is a return to a more normal level now that the play area grant funding has all been spent.

6. Audit

The internal audit for the 2010/11 accounts has been completed without problems and the Parish Council has approved the accounts. The Annual Return has been sent to the external auditors and we await their response. We do not expect any difficulties with this, and when the result of the audit is received it will be published in the usual way.

Discussion

Pat Draper asked why the audit fee was much higher in 2010/11 than the previous year. The Clerk explained that most of the Play Pathfinder grant funding passed through the parish council's finances that year, making the total expenditure over £30,000 instead of the more usual £6000 or so. As audit fees are charged on a fixed scale according to size of budget, the audit fees were higher than usual. They will return to more usual levels for subsequent years.

Pat Draper asked what expenditure was covered by the 'Asset Maintenance' heading, and why was this higher than the previous year. The Clerk replied that this heading covered all costs in maintaining fixed assets such as playground equipment, and also covered playground inspections. More had been spent on both these items in 2010/11.

3. District Councillor's Report – Cllr Tumi Hawkins

1. General

I have now come to the end of my first year as your District Councillor, and it has certainly been a busy year. I was a member of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee, and was the Scrutiny Monitor for the Finance Portfolio. I was involved in two task and finish groups, one looking at value for money in the housing service, and the other reviewing the planning service, and making recommendations on how to improve both. I also served as a substitute member of the Planning Committee.

2. Highlights of local issues

As you know, I attend the monthly parish council meetings of my three parishes, where I give verbal and written reports on council matters that are of interest or relevance, and on local issues that I have been involved in or been asked to assist with. Being involved in the local issues is the most interesting and enjoyable part of the job!

Some of these issues include helping residents navigate their way through our complex planning system so they get to talk to the right people, and speaking on behalf of applicants and/or residents at Planning Committee meetings.

I have assisted Kingston in getting control of the allotments on Cranes Lane, and working the County Councillor Fiona Whelan in finding a resolution to the withdrawal of bus No 18 evening service which affects Kingston and Toft.

We are also on the case of the County which now wants to remove transport from the school children of Toft. The saga of the replacement of the litter bin on Toft green is ongoing but I foresee a favourable conclusion.

The issue of affordable homes in Toft is one that presents opportunities and challenges and I am pleased to be working with the Parish Council to specify the actual needs and identify potential sites. The issue of speed thumps in Caldecote reared its head in August 2010, and Fiona and I, with the help of the Parish Council, were able to raise the matter in the public eye through the radio and print media, and in the County corridors, resulting in a visit to the Parish Council by the Highways manager and an apology for the mess that had been made.

The big issue for Caldecote was the Banner Homes application to build 97 houses in the village. I am pleased that having spoken on behalf of residents and expressed the many concerns that you had, the Planning Committee rejected the application as unsuitable for the village, and with the subsequent appeal being dismissed, the developers are now having to go back to the drawing board, and look at creating a new plan that meets the specific needs of the village. Your Parish Council and I are seeking your views on what you would like to see on the site, so please come and talk to us.

In conjunction with any further development in Caldecote is the issue of the Pumping Station. Following pressure from me, we had a meeting with Anglian Water and County council in October 2010, and I continue to keep the issue on the agenda with the Environmental Services Portfolio Holder.

May I take this opportunity once again to congratulate Caldecote Parish Council for winning the top prize in Community Pride awards 2010. It is a testament to the determination of all the Councillors and Clerks, past and present, of ensuring the village is a great place to live. Well done.

The icing on the cake must be the BT Race to Infinity, where Madingley exchange was one of the winners. As the co-ordinator of the Madingley exchange bid, I am extremely pleased that the hard work put in by the race team paid off. My thanks to every member of the team from the villages of Caldecote, Hardwick, Coton and Madingley, and to individuals, Parish Councils and businesses that supported us with grants and printing etc. The exchange will be upgraded for superfast broadband in the first quarter of 2012, and we expect to have broadband speeds of 40 to 80 Mbps. I am also pleased that three projects were able to share the additional prize of £5000 worth of IT equipment, with the Caldecote Sports pavilion taking £1,500 of that. Well done everyone.

3. Council and Democracy

The Council was under Conservative control with a majority of 1, as the 57 elected members comprised of 29 Conservative, 20 Liberal Democrat, 1 Labour and 7 Independent councillors. This meant discussions on policies were robust indeed.

Following the retirement of Greg Harlock in July 2010, a new Chief Executive Officer was appointed. Mrs Jean Hunter; took up her new post at the Council on 27th September 2010.

Council meetings are usually open to the public, and I will encourage residents to attend where possible, to see how decisions are taken by your elected members. Minutes of these meetings are also available online via the council website.

4. Finance

One of the big issues of the year was the spending review and its impact on the finances of the council. South Cambs collects around £60 million in business rates, but does not keep any of it. This all goes to central government, which then calculates what each local authority gets according to a formula (based on needs) and redistributes as Formula Grant (FG).

The results of the government spending review, was that the council income from national government was reduced in real terms by 15.2%. The Formula Grant reduced from £7.106mil in 2010 to £6.026 mil in 2011, giving us a shortfall of £1.08mil which will be funded from council savings account.

The District element of the council tax has been frozen for 2011/12 only, but the council then plans to raise Council tax in 2012/13 to 2014/15 by up to 3.5% each year.

Central Government has confirmed that South Cambs will be taking on £205 million of national housing debt, for the privilege of keeping all the rents from our nearly 6000 properties and sales under the right to buy and equity share schemes. SCDC is currently a debt free council, and is expected to service the debt over a period of 25-30 years from rental income and a mix of long and short term.

5. Housing

In January 2011, the Audit commission carried out a review of South Cambs District housing service and gave an overall rating of "good", stating that we understand the local housing market and are committed to meeting the needs of both settled and travelling communities. However, the report found that we need to be working more closely with private landlords to meet the needs of all the thousands of people on the housing waiting list which is as a result of the shortage of council housing.

There is a big requirement for large family homes, and we need to free up houses that have become too large for current occupants. The government is encouraging council tenants in that position to consider downsizing if their housing needs change (children flown the nest etc.).

As part of the Welfare reform, it was announced that housing benefit for new claimants will be reduced as from April 2011, and anyone finding themselves in difficulty as a result should seek advice and help from housing support quickly.

6. Localism Agenda

The Bill would devolve greater powers to councils and neighbourhoods and give local communities control over housing and planning decisions. Local communities will be given a real share in local growth, as they are allowed to manage more of the finance they generate. We will have the power to save local facilities and services threatened with closure, and the right to bid to take over local state-run services, and the power to instigate local referendums on any local issue. It should result in a more efficient and local planning system as a new system of neighbourhood local plans will be introduced, and Community Infrastructure Levy starts alongside Section 106.

7. Online Management of Council Tax, Business Rates and Benefits

A new online management system called "My Accounts" was launched on 4-Apr-2011, to enable residents of the district to access and manage their council tax, or business rates, or benefit payments online. To use this system, residents need to go online, and register for a login (User ID and password).

8. Planning

The new IT system came on line on 26th July 2010. Although there were teething problems with it, these have been largely resolved, and it also now includes a mapping system.

We have also seen some of the interim recommendations from the review of the planning service by the Scrutiny Task and Finish group (of which I am a member) already being implemented, and should result in improved services to the residents of the district.

9. Environmental Services

The new blue wheelie bins service been very successful, and has earned the District some money. The plastics have to go to China for recycling, but the rest of the waste is recycled here in the UK.

Anyone wanting a second blue bin can request for one, and pay a small charge for the delivery. The recycling track record for South Cambs is one of the highest in the country.

10. Transport

The District Council has been looking at a comprehensive transport plan for the district, which will be based on existing transport schemes/doctors runs etc running in the villages, as a means of mitigating the loss of our bus services due to the County council cuts. However, there is a long way to go yet, but perhaps something might come together under the "localism agenda"?

11. Young People

Our young people have not been left out! The Children and Young People's Plan has been approved. This document, put together by young people for young people with the help of the council officers, is our promise that we (decision makers at district and parish levels) will consult with and listen to young people when making decisions or providing services that could affect them.

12. Conclusion

It has been a very busy and eventful year, and I am grateful for the opportunity to serve as your District Councillor. My special thanks to all my Parish Councils for the unstinting support I have been given. It has been a pleasure to work with you all, and I look forward to continuing to serve you in the future. As your Councillor, I am here to help you. Please do feel free to contact me with comments, questions, problems, reports, suggestions or complaints. I can be contacted by phone, email, facebook, twitter or via my website as shown in the details below.

tumi@tumihawkins.org.uk

<http://twitter.com/CouncillorTumi>

<http://www.facebook.com/CouncillorTumi>

<http://www.TumiHawkins.org.uk>

Tel: 01954 210840

4. County Councillor's Report – Cllr Fiona Whelan

(In Cllr. Whelan's absence, the Clerk read out the sections on Pavements and Highways, Comberton Village College, and Library Meeting.)

The last year has seen a mixture of plus and minus points for our local villages. The County Council's budget has proved to be difficult as we imagined it would be and many of the cuts are just starting to bite. Please let me know of anyone you know who is in difficulties with the reduced services being provided and I will do my best to intervene. The next 12 months are going to be very testing because so many of the cuts are front loaded, but the glimmer of hope is that rules are being relaxed and Villages will be able to make more decision on the things that are important to them - although anything other than self-funding of things will continue to be an issue.

• County's Budget

Council remained at the same level this year because of a central Government pledge to provide extra funding for the next 4 years (equivalent to an increase of 2.5%) for those Councils that introduced a freeze. There is no guarantee that there will be such a freeze in future years.

The County are looking to make cuts of £161 million over the next 5 years and consequently there is almost no service that will be untouched by these cuts. Youth Services have been almost entirely cut, services to the elderly and vulnerable have also seen a 25% reduction in the amount of care provided in packages since October 1st. The Highways budget has been cut again and road repairs and gritting routes continue to be a concern.

As the year pans out we will have a better idea of how the cuts will affect everyone locally.

• Pavements and Highways.

Budget cuts at the County have meant that much repair work has been delayed yet again. It's sad to note that many of the potholes we had fixed last year have failed again so quickly and I am urging the

County to repair these as quickly as they can. Each year the County cuts the funding available – and this year the cuts have proven to be particularly savage,

The County has introduced a new reporting site:

<http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/transport/roads/reportingafault.htm>

Please continue to report faults to me if unable to access this site, but by using the online facility it starts a clock and we can track how long the fault takes to fix. It will also show up in the County's monthly monitoring statistics and will show how fast / slowly the County are responding to requests from local villages

- **Addenbrooke's Access Road**

Thankfully this is now open at long last and is proving to significantly reduce congestion on certain routes.

- **Cambridge Guided Bus**

What a difference a few weeks make!

The County Council started the clock on the official handover on Thursday 21st April. For the next 28 days the County can officially notify Barn Nuttall of all outstanding defects, and Barn Nuttall have the opportunity to rectify them. If this does not happen, The County Council has contractors waiting to do the rectification work but nothing can be done until 28 days have elapsed from this official handover i.e. 19th May. No new provisional opening dates are being mooted at the moment.

The County have a penalty clause charging the contractors £14,000 for each day that the Busway remains unopened. After 2 years there is now over £50 million at stake. However £1 million has been removed from the Highways budget again this year to set against potential legal fees when the case almost certainly ends up going to litigation.

- **Speed Limits**

At the most recent Cabinet meeting a new speed limit policy was agreed. Whilst the County will stick to its current rules on Speed limits and accident reduction signage in places where there are known accidents and injuries, it will now be easier for Villages to modify their speed limits if they are prepared to pay for the costs involved. Please let me know if there are any areas in the village where you have concerns re speed / safety issues.

- **Local School Issues**

Comberton Village College

We have been monitoring traffic at recent parents' evenings and continue to work with the school and local residents about traffic concerns. Please let Tumi and I know if anything problematic is happening - the quicker we can respond the more effective we can be.

Although the County's Cabinet confirmed the construction of a Secondary School in Cambourne at it's meeting in January, there is still no designated funding available for this. There is no start or completion date for the school and I continue to be concerned about the number of school places available. The school will officially be full from 2013 onwards. Whilst places are available for children moving from Primary School into Year 7 at CVC, other classes are full and spaces are not always available for children whose families move into the village mid way through the academic year. Several appeals have had to be held in the last academic school year because of this.

- **Library Meeting**

Because the Library at CVC has less "footfall" than other Libraries throughout the County, it is currently on the "at risk" list. The County are not currently closing libraries but new ways of running them need to be found because funding is limited as a result of this year's budget. A public meeting has been organised in the Village Hall for May 25th at 7pm and I would urge as many people as possible to attend. I am also urging other local villages, who may be affected, to attend.

- **Village Bus Service**

With the withdrawal of all bus subsidies throughout the County over the next 4 years, local bus operators are making changes to their routes. The megarider boundaries have changed as of April 17th. Toft remains within the cheaper boundary, but the Friday and Saturday 18 service is to be cut. District Cllrs Hawkins, Harangozo and I met with Andy Campbell from Stagecoach to discuss the matter and he has agreed that if the current County subsidy could be provided from somewhere else then the service could be retained. The cost is £7000 per annum for each of the evenings, and Stagecoach would be prepared to run a trial for 6 months - costing £3500 for Friday or Saturday (or £140 per night). I am approaching all of the Villages concerned: Grantchester, Barton, Comberton, Toft, Kingston, Bourn and Cambourne to see if combined funding could be provided to keep this valuable service running. With the withdrawal of County funding for youth services, the withdrawal of this vital evening service is a double blow. There are currently no plans to cut the 18 service further, but it is important that as many people as possible use these services in order that we can maintain them.

I have very much enjoyed working with the Parish Council and Tumi Hawkins over the last 12 months, and look forward to the year ahead. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you are concerned about any issues that I can help with.

5. Parochial Church Council – Janet Clear, Secretary

The PCC holds 4 meetings a year, with extraordinary meetings when required.

At our AGM in March we had 6 committee members and 3 ex-officio members, these being 2 clergy and a Churchwarden. Since then our Team Vicar Susan Johnson has resigned. The Electoral Roll currently has 28 members.

Church Matters

This year, other than the normal services, we've had 3 weddings. It was lovely to see our church looking so beautifully decorated. Sadly there has also been a Funeral.

The Harvest Festival Service included a 'Back to Church Sunday'. Our Team Youth Worker, Susie Thompson, performed part of the service. The Collections from these festive services go to a Charity of the Clergy's choice – these were Romsey Mill and The Children's Society.

Attendances have declined in the last year, although the Family Service is still reasonably attended.

On completion of the repairs to the North Aisle Roof, the English Heritage ruling states that we have to open the Church for an additional 28 Saturdays during the year. This, with the help of many parishioners, we do between March and September.

Church Fabric and Graveyard

Mr Peter Reynolds works tirelessly to keep the Church Fabric and Graveyard in good order. The following are some of the main tasks which have been achieved:-

All repairs to the North Aisle Roof were completed in 2009: at a total cost of £71,635, a huge project for Kingston. It only left the Inspection for defects; this was carried out in December 2010.

The Church Notice Board was kindly repaired by Mr Bill Lovell, last July.

For insurance purposes we've had to mark all valuables within the Church with Smartwater. From recent information, we may now have to do valuable metals outside. Smartwater is a liquid which the Police can easily identify.

In the graveyard, 4 Conifers have been removed. The very old Ash tree has been pollard and braced. This has given the graveyard a much improved appearance.

There have been 4 work days to date. These were very productive and included jobs such as treating chairs for woodworm, cleaning and linseed-oiling the doors and gate, clearing and preparing the soil, where the trees had been, for grass seeding.

Fundraising

With a large payment – more than £7,000 - each year going to The Parish Share (formerly Diocesan Quota), our contribution to the costs of the ministry, we have to keep fundraising. Income has declined as we have lost several older members of the church in recent years and we are budgeting for a loss this year. Events include:-

The Fete and Gift Day, which are held alternative years, a Jumble Sale, Historic Churches Trust 'Ride and Stride', Ghost Stories as told by Robert Lloyd Parry,

the sale of Christmas Cards and Carol Singing. Mr Torrie Smith is in the process of arranging an Auction of Promises evening, this coming October.

Kingston Parish and Church Magazine

An extraordinary meeting was held on the 2nd November which included the PCC, Jill Coleman, Editor of the Magazine and the Parish Council. Mr Tim Fitzjohn produced a survey and delivered to all Parishioners. The outcome was to keep the A5 Booklet format and also there were some very useful suggestions to include in future magazines. Jill decided earlier this year to retire from the editor role but has continued to date because finding a replacement is proving difficult. The PCC are very grateful to Jill. Also we must include and thank the PC for funding the Printing costs and David Coombs for his continued support in publishing the magazine.

Churchwarden.

You may have read in the May Magazine that Peter Reynolds, our Churchwarden, had resigned. The Churchwarden is legally responsible for the contents of the Church as well as preparing for services and maintaining the registers. A Church without a Churchwarden is, strictly speaking, illegal. This could have resulted in our Church being temporarily or even permanently closed. Last night at our PCC meeting, Peter agreed to continue as Churchwarden with the help of the Sidesmen and PCC members.

6. Village Hall Management Committee – Torrie Smith, Chairman

As most, if not all, will be aware following the demise of the Neighbours Group a couple of years ago the Village Hall Committee has largely taken on the role of organising many of the village social events that previously fell under the remit of the Neighbours group. We believe this has been a very positive move as the village now has one group, rather than two separate committee's organising social events with a co-ordinated approach.

The net result of the change in the role of the Village Hall Committee has meant that we now have a thriving committee of eight members with a number of other villagers formally committed to provide support and help in organising events. Furthermore we understand that there are at least two more villagers keen to join the committee at the forthcoming AGM. So far, with the aid of e-mail, we are managing to keep the need for formal, time consuming, meetings to a minimum - we have only needed two formal meetings this year including the AGM. A big thank you to all the committee who put in so much work.

During the course of the year successful events organised have included; the annual Village BBQ, an International Evening, the Christmas Bring and Buy Sale, the Quiz'n'Chips evening, 'Bangers and Mash' and a Pudding Evening in addition, and very importantly thanks to the initiative of Katherine and Mark Stalham, since November there has been a monthly Saturday Pub Evening which is proving a huge success. Most encouragingly individuals and small groups have taken it upon themselves to organise individual events thus spreading the work, and involvement widely amongst the villagers.

We have concluded that the Village Hall, and the villagers who use it, would benefit from the undertaking of a significant upgrade to the premises and facilities. The scale of upgrade we are able to achieve will depend on obtaining Grant Aid for the for the work and we believe that The Hall, being a community facility, should be eligible for such aid which is, potentially, available from a number of sources we have identified. An outline plan of works has been agreed and we are now in the early stages of refining the plans and specifications and expect to submit grant aid applications over the course of the summer. While we hope to upgrade both halls it may be that we will have to undertake the work in two stages, the main hall first followed by the small hall.

Finances. In an average year the Village Hall needs to raise from events some £1200 to £1400 to cover ongoing expenses including repairs undertaken during the annual workday; insurance and energy costs are the major expenditures. This figure does not include more major repairs which need to be undertaken - this year for instance we have had to commission some re-wiring to meet new legal standards for electrical installations which cost £1342 and in the coming year we need to replace the old oil tank, again to meet new legal requirements for oil storage. The estimate for this later work is of the order of £3000, although we intend to try to obtain funding for this within the planned grant aid applications.

During this year income has been £1982 and expenditure £3334. The bank balances currently stand at £4264.

Diary Dates:

Work Day - this Saturday 21st May from 9.00am onwards

AGM - Wednesday 1st June, 8.00pm. Prospective new committee members welcome

BBQ - Saturday 16th July from 6.00pm

7. Footpaths Report

No report from the Footpaths Officer.

The Clerk reminded the meeting that Kingston is a member of the Parish Paths Partnership, through which funding is available for the repair of footbridges, stiles etc. If any parishioners are out walking on footpaths in the locality and find areas where maintenance is required, please report them to Tim Fitzjohn, Footpaths Officer of the Parish Council, or to the Clerk.

Discussion:

Irene Heyman said that some horseriders were using the footpath that runs along the east side of Crane's Lane rather than Crane's Lane itself, which is a bridle path. The footpath starts in the recreation ground and continues along the edge of the next field, which belongs to Mrs Heyman. It is a right of way for pedestrians only. Horseriders are joining the footpath at the point immediately after the recreation ground, where there is a gap in the hedge, giving access onto the footpath from the bridle path. The gap is necessary for access into the field. Mrs Heyman suggested that the problem might not be helped by the fact that the footpath sign is hidden at the point.

It was agreed that the Clerk would refer the matter to Tim Fitzjohn, Footpaths Officer.

8. Kingston Poor Land Charity Report

(In the absence of both trustees the Clerk read out the report.)

Total in bank at 31st Dec 2010 was £6,298.54

Income was £467.48

A total of £450 was paid in 2010. This comprised gifts of book tokens to four school leavers and Christmas donations to three families.

Mrs Joan Reynolds & Dr Donal O'Donnell
Trustees

9. Kingston Neighbourhood Watch

(In the absence of the Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator the Clerk read out the report.)

We have had the usual ecops messages over the last 12 months. The most notable one was one that went wrong.

I had a police message warning us of man claiming to be representing EON and asking if the interviewee wished to change their energy provider.

The message suggested that he was not genuine. I passed on the email and later heard from one or two people that he was in the village. One villager challenged him and actually took a photograph of him. It transpired later that he was a genuine employee of E-on and I suggested to the police that he was owed an apology. Whether or not this happened I don't know. At least the whole episode showed that our NW system worked in this case!

10. Open forum

No questions or further discussion.

Signed.....

Date.....