**Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting**

**Held on May 9th, 2016 at the Village Hall,**

**Commencing 7pm.**

Those present were: Jeremy Cameron, Henry Birkbeck, Antonia Hanbury, Ralph Sliwa, Eoghan Sheils, Fiona Wrigley (Councillors) Lorraine Copeman (Parish Clerk).

Also present were: Belinda Bush, Adam Bush, Brian Wright, Brian Cawston and Martin Hickey (West Acre Theatre).

The Chair welcomed Fiona Wright to the Parish Council.

**1. To approve the minutes of the last meeting.**

The minutes were approved and signed.

**2. Report of the Parish Council.** Sally Bridle sent her apologies. Ralph read out Sally’s report:

It is with a degree of sadness that I am writing my last report as Chair of West Acre Parish Council. Over the 22 years I have served on the Council there have been many worthwhile moments. I would like to thank the Councillors – past and present- for their perseverance and efforts over the last year, and express my appreciation for all Lorraine’s hard work and stepping up to the plate as Parish clerk – no mean task!

However, over this last year we seemed to have had no substantial objectives and have therefore not made any great contribution to the Parish, this is not helped by the indifference and apathy of most of the residents. Our biggest effort to date has been to assist Ralph and the Village Hall Committee in applying to the BLF for funding for a new village Hall, sadly this was not to be.

The role of Parish Councillors has become more bureaucratic and the ‘rules’ more inflexible making it inappropriate to continue in the way we have been. Now is the time to review the role and effectiveness of the Parish Council in West Acre, and to tighten up on procedure and the position of the Councillors. The fundamental principle of a Parish Council is that it should be an autonomous body capable of making binding decisions that are in the best interests of the parishioners. It has been very easy to let things slip and I found it difficult to instigate the changes that should have been made. I hope the Parish Council can find a way forward and a new sense of direction that will serve the residents of West Acre in a more fruitful way.

**Page 374**

A vote of thanks was given from the Councillors to Sally for all her hard work over the years. Valid points were raised in the report. However, some Councillors felt that it was not a factual report and that the Parish Council had achieved a lot more in the past year. The report can be found in the file. Action: To discuss the future of the Parish Council at the next Parish Council meeting.

**3. To hear reports from groups working in the village:**

**a) Church:** Unfortunately Stuart Nairn could not attend and sent his apologies. Ralph read the report from Stuart: The main news from the church is as follows;
We remain concerned about the low numbers attending worship from West Acre which makes it difficult to maintain the life of the church, maintain the building and put on events. We have made application for a roof repair grant from the government for the nave roof. We shall hear the outcome of this at the beginning of July. As with the village we are concerned about the state of the churchyard wall and continue to seek ways to address this issue. The life of the church in the wider group remains buoyant with positive numbers and a desire to serve the community - each of our churches is everyone's church and we encourage folk to travel for worship in the same way that we have to travel for all other aspects of our 21st century living. The report can be found in the file. Eoghan asked if the Church would be ready to discuss other uses for the Church. It was felt that as there were no facilities it would not be feasible to use the building as a village hall. Action: Parish Councillors to report how they think the Church could be used for other purposes and to ask parishioners for thoughts on the matter.

**b)** **Borough Council:** Jim Moriarty sent his apologies. There was no report from the Borough council.

**c).** **County Council:** No reply to the emails sent to the County Councillor.

**d). Old Village Hall:** Henryread the village hall report stating the hall was used most days with Dog Training, Art Group, Youth Club, Billiards Club and Carpet Bowls being some of the groups regularly using the hall. It is also used for Parish Council meetings, as a Polling station, over 60’s and children’s Christmas party venues and Funeral Wakes. Less than £500 has been spent on repairs. Fundraising events for the village hall have included Bonfire Party, Craft Fair and Civil War re-enactment. Thanks went to Kelly, Ralph and Betty for all their hard work and to all the other people that have contributed. Funds stand at £9,300. Henry stated that West Acre Village Hall was in the process of changing to West Acre Village Hall Ltd. All agreed the village hall was a very valuable social centre. The full report can be found in the file. The Chair thanked Henry for his report.

**Page 375**

**e). New Village Hall:** Ralph read the following report: Since the last report we succeeded in clearing the first hurdle of our application for Big Lottery funding, but fell at Stage 2. A copy of the official notice of refusal can be found in the file. The development committee met subsequently to discuss what to do next. We need to find answers to the criticism that we are not meeting the needs of the local community. £650,000 was asked for with the project costing £800,000. Ralph, Sally and Henry had put in a phenomenal amount of working and this was a huge blow. A discussion was held regarding what other options are there for a village hall. Are there any other buildings that could be used?

**100 Club:** In the 12 months since May 2015, £1,582-40 has been distributed in prize money.

£1,809-60 went towards the village hall development fund. In September 2015 the allocation of prize money was changed, with an increase to 50% of the monthly takings being distributed between 3 prizes. There are still numbers available, either on a long-term basis, or foe one-off purchase. The reports can be found in the file.

**f).** **Billiards Club:** Phillip Welham sent his apologies and Jeremy read out his report. During the last 12 months the club fielded teams in the Narbeck Junior Billiards League (2 sides), and West Norfolk B.L (4 sides), with 14 members in total representing the Village in competition. West Acre B was runners-up in the Narbeck Junior Leagues K.O Cup competition, while West Acre C was League Champions in the West Norfolk Billiards League, congratulations to all our players who represented these sides.

More notably our A team were victorious in the 'Norfolk County Team Championship', while member Jack Easter was runner-up in the National under 19s Championship.

Rochy Woods (who has been playing for us for 6 years), retained her National Girls title and then went onto excel and reach the Final of the World Women's Championship at the age of 17 years. This was a great achievement for Rochy and the Club.

Our membership numbers have dropped a little, (we unfortunately lost two of our members who had used the Club weekly for 15 years) and consequently during the last summer we did have a 2 month period (July - August) when the Reading room was not used once.     However we have just about covered out outgoings this year, while our now annual BBQ (June 25th this year....... everybody very welcome), just about brings enough funds in to cover our Clubs Electricity bill. The report can be found in the file.

The Chair thanked Phillip for the report.

**g).** **Carpet Bowls.** Belinda read out her report: With 20 regular members we are continuing to enjoy playing Carpet Bowls on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. And our funds of just over £2,000 are growing which is just as well as it looks as though we may have to buy a new carpet which varies in price from £550-00 - £670-00 as 1 of ours is getting a bit worse for wear (which isn’t bad considering we have had it 2nd hand for several years).

**Page 376**

Last year’s internal competition was won by Brian Roberts and Roy Withers for the doubles and me in the singles.

Presentation of the trophies would normally have been awarded at the annual Christmas meal which was held at “The Gate” at Fair Green, but due to the winners being away they were presented on our last club game of the year.

We were delighted to receive a call from a member of Whissonsett Carpet Bowls asking if we were interested in playing a friendly game as they don’t play in league games and their members wanted to try and find new teams to play with. So in March they brought 12 of their players over and we had a great time. We are planning to go to Whissonsett in June.

We only play in 1 league game and that is “Let’s Get Active” which is in the afternoons this suits every one as they don’t want to play in the summer league as many are away and the others are generally on a Sunday which is an all-day event.

Anybody wishing to come and join us is very welcome and can contact me for more details.

The report can be found in the file. The Chair thanked Belinda for her report and commended her for such a thriving club.

**h).** **Youth club:** Antonia read out her report. The Youth Club is run by Antonia Hanbury for the West Acre Village Hall Committee (of which she is a member) as part of the Committee’s provision of facilities for the benefit of the village and neighbouring communities. Its activities therefore are part of the activities of Charity No. 304109. Antonia and her helper, Deb Carter, both have DBS clearance, as does one of the mothers who also assist at times. The club caters for children from 5 to 16 years old and meets on most Fridays during the year from 5 to 7pm. In addition to coming to the West Acre Children’s Christmas party, their activities included:- Pond-dipping, Swimming, Badminton, Football, BBQ in the woods, Playground games, a Film evening, Decorating the Village Hall Christmas Tree, visits to the Lambing at Soigne Farm, Music/dance, Charades, Mood-boards, Debates, Inside games, Farm Tours, learning about crops, livestock and harvesting & feeding the llamas. Last year they took part in the ice bucket charity challenge in the swimming pool. Woodland walks identifying trees. Picking up litter and learning about recycling. This year we plan a project on the River Nar and a visit to the Trout Farm. The programme is popular, and offers some activities not available at other nearby clubs, with numbers of children attending varying between 5 and 19 each week. We welcome any parents or Adults who would like to assist, and can organize and pay for them to be DBS checked. Club fees are £2 per evening which includes a substantial snack meal and drinks, and at 30th April the funds stood at £676.51 which will contribute to a special outing to be arranged for this summer. The report can be found in the file. The Chair thanked Antonia for her report.

**Page 377**

**I). Art Club** Ralph read the following report: In the year May 2015 to April 2016 there were 38 sessions attended by 159 people. With income at £700 and expenses of £354.18 there is a profit of £345.82. Last year a loss of £214.90 was recorded.

Art club meets on a Wednesday evening between 7pm and 9pm. The activity is open to anyone and welcomes new visitors. The club has a range of abilities and tuition is given to enable all to develop their abilities and interests. The Chair thanked Ralph for his report. The report can be found in the file.

**j).** **West Acre Theatre:** Martin Hickey read out his report stating nearly 9,000 people attended a mixture of 57 stage plays, 84 workshops for young people, 38 adult workshops – varying from rug to glass making, 8 exhibitions of local artist’s work and 24 film screenings on Wednesday afternoons, plus 19 live evening transmissions from the National Theatre.

Raising the finance for the theatre’s major development project, a 150 seat theatre in the round with a new foyer and bar, workshop and accommodation for visiting artists (Phase 2) has been on hold for over 2 years as a result of an unfounded and misguided attempt by HMRC to claw back the VAT claimed and paid on the building costs of the first phase of this development. Martin was pleased to report that the HMRC finally backed down last month and the theatre is now free to go ahead with the not inconsiderable task of raising a very large sum of money with the aim of building completion by 2018. Jeremy asked if other joint projects with the village could be looked into. Ralph thanked the theatre for the Craft Fair joint project. The full report can be found in the folder. The Chair thanked Martin for his report and all agreed the theatre was a major asset that puts West Acre on the map.

**k).** **West Acre Friends**: Ralph read out the following report: This group has continued to meet on the first Wednesday of every month. The aim of the group is to provide an opportunity for people to meet up, chat and play games for example Scrabble and cards. We also have drinks and delicious cakes. This year 51 people have attended the sessions which means we have a small debit of £9.It would be wonderful if more people could come to the sessions. Everyone is welcome. The report can be found in the file.

**4. Comments from the audience.** There were no comments from the audience.

**5. Close the Meeting:** The meeting closed at 7.50pm

**Page 378**