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# WOODHAM FERRERS AND BICKNACRE PARISH COUNCIL A QUALITY COUNCIL

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**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON  
FRIDAY 2<sup>ND</sup> MAY 2008 @ 8PM  
@ WOODHAM FERRERS VILLAGE HALL, WOODHAM FERRERS, ESSEX**

**Present on Top Table: Barry Arnold, JP Chairman, Lord Hanningfield, DL, Leader of Essex County Council, John Whittingdale, MP, Chief Superintendent Graeme Bull, Essex Police Richard Poulter, CBC, Karen Kuderovitch, Clerk to the Council**

**Guests: Cllr J. Saltmarsh, Cllr. C. Saltmarsh, Cllr. J. Bishop, Cllr. L. Carroll, Cllr. R. Blanks, Cllr. G. Woricker, Cllr A. Mair, Anne Bishop, Rural Housing, Joy Sheppard & Alison East, EALC, Mary Cottee, St Andrews Church, Rachael Plunkett, Head of Priory School,  
Reps from the following groups, B&WFCP, FOPF,**

**Displays: Jesters, Priory Primary School, Bicknacre, Essex Fire, Friends of Priory Fields, Bicknacre & Woodham Ferrers Community Project, Woodham Ferrers Dog Show**

**Approx. 140 Members of the Public**

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The Chairman introduced himself and all of the guests present on the top table. The opportunity was given to anyone present who felt they would like more details on any topic covered to contact the Clerk, Karen Kuderovitch, by appointment. The Chairman gave mention to all the groups in the Community who work so hard and thanked them for their help.

The Chairman asked Joy Sheppard, Chief Executive of the EALC to come forward and kindly present the Council with their Quality Status Certificate. Joy Sheppard gave a wonderful overview of the criteria that Woodham Ferrers & Bicknacre Parish Council had achieved to meet to be awarded the certificate and the work the Clerk had to put into to achieve the CILCA qualification and then Quality Status. Joy mentioned her amazement of how well organised the Annual Meeting was and the amount of parishioners present. Joy then passed the certificate to Lord Hanningfield and the Clerk was asked to step up and accept this certificate. Lord Hanningfield congratulated the Clerk and the Council on this major achievement. The Clerk was also presented with a Quality Status Certificate of Achievement & Appreciation signed by all the Councillors to thank her for all her hard work. The Clerk responded with a short speech, explaining how pleased she was with the award, the personal achievement for her and her hope to now move the Council onto bigger and better things. She thanked Joy Sheppard and in particular, Alison East for all their hard work with her portfolio building and the Councillors for their support. The Clerk also reminded everyone that she was now located at the back of the building and all were welcome to make an appointment to come and see her.

The Chairman accepted a request from First Responders and a short presentation was given about the role undertaken as a First Responder and an appeal for volunteers.



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# WOODHAM FERRERS AND BICKNACRE PARISH COUNCIL

## A QUALITY COUNCIL

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John Whittingdale was invited by the Chairman to speak and his opening comment was that the meeting was the best attended Parish Meeting he was invited to. Mr Whittingdale gave information on when he joined as a Member of Parliament and gave a speech on current issues including boundary changes and that he holds regular surgeries should people wish to talk with him on a particular issues. Mr Whittingdale mentioned these surgeries may commence in South Woodham Ferrers soon. There was a mention of the terrorism bill currently being discussed together with human fertilisation and embryology. Mr Whittingdale gave details of discussion surrounding web content, tourism and the impact of the Olympic Games being held in Stratford. Mr Whittingdale also talked of the health problems within the NHS and a deficit of £20million. There was also information shared on the difficulties surrounding Housing, the lack of social housing and the increase on the pressure of local services. The steady loss of local services was highlighted using the closure of the Post Office in Bicknacre. The A12 was mentioned and the huge problems experienced. Mr Whittingdale expressed that he felt a strong local community an active Parish Council and many people willing to give free time. Mr Whittingdale thanked the audience.

The Chairman thanked Mr Whittingdale for his speech and invited Lord Hanningfield to speak.

Lord Hanningfield commenced by congratulating the Parish Council on their recent Quality Status award. There was a mention of Cllr. Norman Hume and following on from last year, Lord Hanningfield announced there had been £154K awarded for works on the B1418 for traffic calming measures. Lord Hanningfield gave details of a new £2million grant scheme available for youth projects and encouraged the Parish Council and the audience to consider any request and apply for money. It was also announced that £1million had also been made available for any small projects. Lord Hanningfield explained that the A12, being the arterial route through the County was under huge pressure and gave details of incidents when the road came to a standstill and the financial impact, £200 million per year. It was stated that there was an enquiry being carried out to see what could be achieved to alleviate and that medium to long term solutions would be considered. Lord Hanningfield made reference to the closure of the Post Offices despite objections. There are debates taking placed and to whether Essex County Council could run postal services and the possibility that they may re-open again, in local Community Buildings. Lord Hanningfield talked about the Olympic Games and the opportunities which may open up into Essex (until 1964 Stratford was in Essex). Lord Hanningfield also stated he is the Transport spokesman in the House of Lords as well. Lord Hanningfield thanked the audience.

The Chairman thanked Lord Hanningfield for his speech and invited Stephen Bates from the Bicknacre & Woodham Ferrers Community Project to give a presentation. Stephen invited the Chairman of the group, Anthony Flaherty, to stand up. Patrick Baker from St. Andrews Church gave a short speech and handed over to Stephen Bates who gave a very detailed and informative presentation on reminding the audience how the project began and how the group had progressed to where they are today. Stephen thanked the Parish Council for their support, reminded that everyone was welcome to attend the meetings and that the Bicknacre Festival would be taking place on the 19<sup>th</sup> July 2008. Stephen then invited Alison Doherty from Jesters to speak. Alison gave an overview of Jesters Community Interest Club and their place in the Community. It was explained they employ local people and that care is provided for 500 people



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# WOODHAM FERRERS AND BICKNACRE PARISH COUNCIL

## A QUALITY COUNCIL

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(not all at same time). Alison expressed a hope that care for 0-16 year olds could be catered for and the fact that their present premises was not adequate for their growing needs. Alison was thanked by Stephen Bates and Stephen informed the audience that £3 ½ - 4 million was needed to complete the project. A Consultant had been appointed to help with the Business Plan. Roles have been created, in particular a Fund Raising Co-ordinator to apply for grants. Stephen shared the information that the original ideas for the building may alter on the Consultants advice. The Funding for the project was explained and that in the future further questionnaires maybe undertaken.

The Chairman thanked the speakers for their pieces and invited Anne Bishop from the Rural Housing Trust to make a presentation. Mrs Bishop gave a very informative presentation on Rural Housing, highlighting the facts they have been established for 32 years and have provided 3,000 homes in 33 counties. A housing needs survey was detailed and the audience were informed the Parish Council would be undertaking the survey in the near future. If a need was established, a suitable site would be sought. A village information day would also be held. Mrs Bishop encouraged parishioners to complete the survey and offered a chance for questions to be put to her at the relevant session.

The Chairman thanked Mrs Bishop for her presentation and invited Peter Athey from Friends of Priory Fields to make a speech.

Mr Athey gave details of the groups' achievements, the main one being the English Heritage Lottery Grant of £130K for the purchase and development of the land at Priory Fields. Mr Athey also asked for volunteers to help and gave the meeting dates of the group as 2<sup>nd</sup> weekend in each month, Saturday and Sundays mornings.

The Chairman thanked Peter for his speech and invited Jill Oliver from the Traffic Advisory Committee to make her speech.

Mrs Oliver repeated the previous concerns at past AGM's, in particular the size and the speed of the heavy HGV's which pass through the villages. Mrs Oliver explained that many brainstorming sessions had taken place with the Advisory Committee and advice had been taken on what was needed. Mrs Oliver stated the B1418 was a major connecting route and that Cllr Norman Hume had been met with and took a wish list from the group. Mrs Oliver took delight in informing the audience that £154K had been granted together with an extra amount of £22,000 and that, in conjunction with the Parish Council, correct advice would be taken on how to spend the money to ensure it would be spent with the utmost effect.

The Chairman thanks Jill for her time and efforts and invited Chief Superintendent Graeme Bull to make his presentation.

Chief Superintendent Graeme Bull introduced himself and gave some information about his role within the Essex Police. Mr Bull then gave a detailed and very informative presentation on crime in the local area which included the following statistics for Bicknacre, East and West Hanningfield from April 2007 – March 2008:



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# WOODHAM FERRERS AND BICKNACRE PARISH COUNCIL

## A QUALITY COUNCIL

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- Only 12 dwelling burglaries
- Only 31 other burglary (sheds/garages/commercial)
- Only 33 thefts of/from motor vehicles
- Only 22 criminal damages
- Only 28 minor assaults, harassments public order
- Only 17 assaults resulting in more serious injuries
- Only 1 Robbery

Other points:

- There had been a 2.5% reduction in the number of anti-social behaviour incidents for the whole Woodham rural area compared to the previous year.
- A mobile police station regularly visits the Parish (every 3 months).
- The local PCSO (Graeme Gordon) conducts a number of cold calling visits every month in our area.
- Regular police representation at the Parish Council Meetings.
- Neighbourhood watch was promoted and it was hoped a new group could be formed.
- Special Constables and Community Speedwatch was encouraged.

The Chairman thanked Graeme Bull for an excellent presentation and invited Richard Poulter to make his speech.

Mr Poulter covered a number of issues; including the great announcement of the traffic calming measures, something he had been campaigning for on our behalf for a long time and confirmed the total amount was £176K. Mr Poulter also mentioned the black bins collection and confirmed there would not be a move from weekly collections. Mr Poulter also mentioned the change from bulk refuse to Saturday standouts and also pledged his support for the possibility for a Rural Housing Project within the Parish. Mr Poulter stated it was his pleasure to serve the local community.

The Chairman thanked Mr Poulter for his excellent support to the Parish Council and invited Neville Jessop, Neighbourhood Watch Scheme to say a few words. Mr Jessop was not prepared for this but gave some very valid information about the scheme and that the scheme needed recommencing in Woodham Ferrers & Bicknacre and the need for 4 volunteers. He asked if anyone was interested to contact him direct, or speak with him at the end of the meeting.

The Chairman thanked all the speakers for their participation and the meeting then moved onto the Questions & Answers session. The Chairman explained due to the time he would have to



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# WOODHAM FERRERS AND BICKNACRE PARISH COUNCIL

## A QUALITY COUNCIL

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limit the questions to 1 per person, but again reminded the audience any questions not answered could be directed to the Clerk at a later stage. Chief Superintendent Graeme Bull kindly offered to take the microphone for the questions.

### **Question 1 – (Please note the questions are abbreviated)**

Why was the In Touch not supported by the Parish Council?

The Chairman responded and explained that in order to achieve Quality Status the Parish Council had to start publishing its own Newsletter and there was no direct intention not to support the In Touch. The Chairman made a claim that the In Touch reached only approx. 250 people. At this stage there was an outburst from the Editor of the In Touch accusing the Chairman of an untruth and the claim was made that the magazine reached 500+ people. The Chairman made reference to a recent disagreement and asked the gentleman in question to calm himself.

### **Question 2**

How could people become involved in the Traffic Calming?

Jill Oliver asked for anyone interested to contact her direct.

### **Question 3**

A gentleman asked why he could find information and the Parish Council could not?

The Chairman responded that some information being printed in the In Touch was often non-factual and asked why the Clerk had not been contacted to clarify any information before it was printed. The Clerk also questioned why she had never been contacted by the In Touch to make any attempt to work together and ensure the correct information was given.

### **Question 4**

It was asked what was feasible in the Rural Housing Scheme?

Anne Bishop gave an explanation and reiterated that it was a real opportunity for young people.

### **Question 5**

It was asked that once the traffic had been calmed in Woodham Ferrers what would the Parish Council do about the vehicles that mount the pavements, putting everyone in danger?

Richard Poulter responded to say that advice would be taken from Essex County Council about the options available. Jill Oliver added that there were already some plans in progress.



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# WOODHAM FERRERS AND BICKNACRE PARISH COUNCIL A QUALITY COUNCIL

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## Question 6

The question was asked why there was an increase in the Parish Council Precept this year?

The Chairman responded to explain the increase was mainly to the new Parish Council Office, the expenditure for Quality Status amongst other things. The Chairman also highlighted the fact that the Councillors do not claim any costs whatsoever and that saves approx £5K every year. The Chairman gave a comparison of that living in Danbury in a Band D Property is 100% higher than the same Band D in Bicknacre. The Chairman assured the audience that the Parish Council were always very careful what was spent. The Chairman gave info that the Parish Council had accumulated approx £175,000 in Grants in the past 5 years (35,000 for the Hooe, 133,000 for the fields, bus stops about 5000.00 computer 1000.00)

The Chairman also highlighted the fact that this Council does not claim any expenses and making an approximate saving of £15,000 in the last 10 years.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending, the presentations given and all the people that helped make the event happen.

Meeting closed at 10.15pm