

Burton Agnes Parish Council

Annual General Meeting

Monday 1 June 2015

Those present were:

Parish Councillors

Mrs S Burt	(Chair)
Mr G Burt	(Treasurer)
Mr K Hawkins	
Mrs M Scrowston	
Mrs M Shipley	
Mrs J Benson	(Clerk)

Guests

Councillor Jane Evison (Ward Councillor)
Councillor Jonathan Owen (Ward Councillor)

Members of the Public

Mrs L Bell Burton Agnes

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Mrs C Shipley and Mrs J Benson

2. Declaration of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the last meeting

Minutes of the last AGM were read by Mrs Burt and were signed off as a true record.

4. Annual Report

The Chair reported that 2014/15 had been a busy year for the Parish Council. At the beginning of the financial year the accounts for 2013/14 had not been prepared, financial records were incomplete and the Council had been without access to its bank accounts for a number of months. The Council was non-compliant with HMR&C procedures with respect to PAYE (a legal requirement) for the Clerk's salary and were in no position to have their finances audited, also a legal requirement. The Council's financial 'records' consisted of a large box full of assorted documents, bills (some unpaid) and receipts. The Treasurer had done a sterling job in retrieving a non-compliant situation, securing audit clearance and regularising the Council's position with the tax authorities. He had also recovered the Council's position with respect to VAT in successfully reclaiming the VAT paid by the Council in each of the previous 2 financial years, some £526.

The Council had met 6 times during FY 2014/15 and had dealt with:

12 Planning applications
9 individual cases from Parishioners
Over 100 items of correspondence.

They had been consulted and offered opinions on issues ranging from the condition of verges in the Parish to embryo proposals for Travellers transit camps, and the possible re-routing of the National Cycle Route which ran through Burton Agnes as a result of the increased traffic likely to be generated by the relocation of the car park of Burton Agnes Hall.

£3000 of discretionary funding had been secured, for which thanks were due to Christine Lee. This had paid for the supply and erection of new notice boards in all three villages.

In the Financial Year 2014/15 the Parish Council has been represented on:

Lissett Wind Farm Community Fund panel
Caythorpe Gas Storage Facility fund
Driffield and Bridlington Community Partnership (the continued existence of which was under review)

and had attended ad-hoc meetings on issues of relevance to the Parish, including one at Lissett and Ulrome Parish Council concerning an initiative for a new cycle route in the area.

The past year had seen the launch in March of the Parish Council website which would hopefully give the Council a further means of communicating with the Parish and advertising activities in the Parish. The Chair recorded her gratitude to Stevan Sajkovic at East Riding for his help in setting up the website, and to Steve Hey of Image Creations who, with great patience, had taught her how to populate it.

The Chair observed that shape of Parish spending had differed markedly in 2014/15 from that of 2013/14. Last year the Parish Council had spent more on administering itself – ie overhead (clerk's salary, tax, insurance, fees) than on delivering services to the Parish. The position in 2014/15 had been markedly different. However, there was no room for complacency as, if expenditure resulting from grants were removed, the position, although an improvement on the previous year was not so encouraging.

Furthermore, the Chair noted that if account were taken of the fact that over half the expenditure on recurring Parish services consisted of paying East Riding out of monies they remitted to the Parish Council via the Precept for services East Riding delivered to the Parish, and over which the Parish exercised absolutely no control, it was difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Parish Council – and East Riding – were acting as very expensive post boxes.

Even conceding that the Parish Council had done other things for the community which had a value beyond the monetary, the Chair's view was that it was necessary to question whether there was a better way of doing the job.

Her view was that it was not a sustainable model for the Parish Council to be consuming as much as it delivered, and, for much of the service being delivered, to be playing shops with East Riding. She expressed her view that for the longer term, unless members of the Parish Council were prepared to put effort into activities of benefit to the community or seek funding for projects to benefit the Parish, or work with other Parishes to secure shared benefits, they not delivering value and should consider economies of scale through merger with a neighbouring Parish or Parishes.

On a positive note, the Chair noted that for the current year funding had been secured a bus shelter in Burton Agnes, and that the Parish Council had played a small part in facilitating funding for the School Science Project, which would keep the Council's cost/benefit ratio positive for 2015/16. It was, however, clear that it would be necessary to start thinking out of the customary box in terms of longer horizons if the Parish Council were to remain viable.

The Chair expressed her disappointment that the Parish Council, in common, with many, perhaps most others, had been re-elected without a contest and that it was carrying 3 vacancies. This in her view was indicative of a complete lack of interest in the local community which was in part due to a failure on the part of the Council to engage with that community. She observed that it would be surprising if many knew who the Parish Councillors were or what issues they deal with. She expressed her hope that by the time the next set of elections came round, new people would put themselves forward. She observed that in most sectors, competition helped to drive up standards.

Finally the Chair thanked the Ward Councillors for their stoicism/masochism in turning up to Parish Council meetings and offering their advice so freely.

5. Financial Statement and Agreement of Audit Submission

The Treasurer reported that as agreed at the last Parish Council meeting the Council's return, using the combined Reserve and Current Account figures had been submitted to Winn and Co (Bridlington) in 12 May. These balanced to the penny and were cleared on 14 May.

With the agreement of the meeting the accounts were signed off by the Chair and would be forwarded to PKF Littlejohn before the 8 June deadline.

Taking account of the £538 uncleared items, the closing current account balance for 2014/15 was £2362.13, and that of the reserve account £1247.31.

The Treasurer reminded the meeting that midway through 2014 it had been agreed to transfer £1K from the Current to the Reserve Account to cover future project cost of the bus shelter. This had not yet been actioned and was thus included in the Current Account balance. This was noted.

6. The Annual General Meeting closed at 7.25.