

CHAIRS REPORT PARISH MEETING 2017.

In the past year the Parish Council has continued with its work on behalf of the community of Little Waltham.

Unfortunately we had to raise the precept this year, for Band D properties that means an increase from £32.46 per annum to £46.08 per annum, an increase of £0.26p per week. In recent years our increases have been very small or indeed nonexistent. Unfortunately, this year the Parish Council will see a decline in income, because Chelmsford City Council has removed its grant funding to Parish Councils. In 2015/16, Little Waltham Parish Council received a grant of £2326 from the City Council. This was reduced to £1673 last year and has now been removed completely. Thus, to simply maintain existing services provided by the Parish Council, it is necessary for that amount to be added to our precept. Also, many of the general administration and running costs of the Parish Council have increased this year in excess of the amount anticipated and the shortfall of some £3500 is thus met from reserves. It is important in conjunction with good financial planning for the Parish Council to retain an adequate reserve going forward. Our strategy statement (which can be found on our website) details the various tasks that are carried out by the Parish Council and what the Parish Council is looking to achieve in the coming financial year. We hope that by increasing the precept more substantially for 2017/18 it will mean that the Parish Council will be in a more secure and sustainable financial position to meet our future commitments.

We have undertaken repairs to the play area along with installing a new item of equipment - called "Twin Peaks" and a new picnic table. We arranged for the War Memorial to be cleaned and received a grant equating to 75% of the cost of doing so. We received some CIL funds and we put that towards buying and installing two new notice boards one at Ash Tree Corner and the other near the Windmill in Chatham Green.

We undertook a parking survey of Brook Hill, The Street and some of the associated roads off Brook Hill. We did this to identify if there was any demand for introducing formal and enforceable restrictions for parking in the village. The result of the survey was that whilst residents accepted that there was at times of the day a parking issue they were against any formal restrictions being put into place. On that basis the Parish Council are working with the surgery and the school, to try to assist them with some of the parking issue that have been identified that relate to them specifically. On that basis we are looking into trying to improve the car park, by possibly extending it - improving the lighting and signage.

Allied to the car parking issue there has also been concerns relating to the volume and speed of the traffic through the village. We last had a traffic survey done in 2009 another one which will measure both volume of traffic and the speed of traffic will take place on Brook Hill in May. The results of this survey will help us establish if we can take any additional measures in respect of the speed of traffic.

We are continuing with our initiative to bring affordable housing to Little Waltham - and we understand that talks are progressing between the Rural Community Council of Essex and the landowner.

We continue to administer allotments and we have 2 available half plots at the Blasford Hill site.

We are investigating the possibility of producing a Parish Newsletter, the costs of which would be met from advertising revenue generated by the publication.

A lot of our time is taken up with planning applications. Most of these applications are uncontroversial, however where they are not we have made our views clear and where necessary we have attended Planning Committee Meetings of the City Council to present our viewpoint.

In the past year there have been several which have concerned us. Firstly the Marriage Mill site. The most recent application for Marriages to relocate their Mill to a site near Boreham Airfield has once again been refused. We opposed this and the previous applications because of the amount of heavy traffic that it would generate on a 24/7 basis, the bight on the countryside and the loss of amenity for the residents of this area and the fact that the roads in this area are not wide enough for such heavy lorries. More recently the application by Channels Golf Club to amend the Section 106 notice which required them to provide a 18 hole golf course as part of the original planning permission for the Channels Development. The owners of the golf course have said that running the golf course is no longer economic and have asked for the Section 106 notice to be removed allowing them to sell this land for more housing. We have strongly opposed this.

The new Local Plan that was published at the end of March has the deadline for submissions are 11th May. We held a special meeting on 19th April to hear the views of the Parish with regard to the proposals. Two areas within the Little Waltham Parish have been identified for housing - 3,000 houses off Essex Regiment Way close to the park and ride and 800 on the boundary with Broomfield - the main incentive for housing here is that the developers will build an additional access road into the hospital.

The main issue about these developments is that there is not the supporting infrastructure to support them. Essex Regiment Way is at close to capacity at the moment - the proposed 3,000 houses will be in addition to the current Channels development, and further developments at Great Leighs. The long-awaited NE By-Pass is still a dotted line on a map. This road is essential in light of all these further developments. In terms of the additional 800 house off Blasford Hill, we are sceptical about the benefits of an additional access road to the hospital in as much as any benefits will be negated by the additional traffic produced by the 800 new houses.

We have combined with other parishes in the area to instruct consultants to assist us with our responses to the Local Plan and we will be making a detailed submission on behalf of the parish. We appreciate that houses have to be built somewhere but we believe that the City Council's decision to concentrate the housing in this area is flawed. There are other areas - nearer the A12 corridor that we think are better suited for these developments and we will be putting these ideas forward.

A lot of the work of the Parish Council goes on due to the commitment of my fellow councillors and I would like to thank them for all their help and work over the past year

I would also like to thank the other organisations on behalf of the Parish Council who do so much to the help the village and the community.

Thanks are also due to our County Councillor John Aldridge and City Councillors James Raven and Barry Knight who attend the majority of our meetings and are always willing to assist us and helps to fight our corner.

The work of the Parish Council is supported by our Clerk Suzanne and on behalf of the Parish council I would like to thank Suzanne for all her help and assistance over the past year.