

CHAIRS REPORT

PARISH MEETING 2021.

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

Last year all our lives were affected by the Pandemic. We moved to having on-line meetings via Zoom which we felt actually assisted in improving local democracy. We had more people attending the Zoom meetings than we have traditionally had attending in person. To enable us to meet virtually required a change in the legislation which the government brought in at the beginning of the first lock-down. Unfortunately the Government has decided despite representations to the contrary not to extend this provision, therefore after this meeting we are required to go back to meeting in person. On that basis we will probably decide not to meet in June as that will be before the full relaxation of the indoor requirements due on 21st June. So after this meeting our next one will be in July.

During the course of last year we were disappointed that we had to cancel the proposed VE Day Celebrations. However I am delighted to say that we are hoping to have a Village/Parish Celebration to coincide with Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee Celebrations over the extended weekend from 2nd June – 6th June 2022. The event is in its planning stages and a number of organisations have been approached, if you are interested in being involved or wish to offer assistance please let us know.

We have a full complement of 9 councillors, during the course of the year we co-opted Paul Scott and Richard Allen.

We have dealt with a number of issues during the course of the year - both local and city-wide.

The Local Plan has now been adopted by the City Council, and one of major issues to affect the village is the proposed Bloor Homes development at the hospital. We spent a good deal of time discussing the development with Bloor Homes along with Broomfield Parish Council. It was therefore very disappointing that when Bloor finally applied for planning permission they applied for 550 houses as opposed to the 450 in the Local Plan and the number they had been discussing with us. We lodged our objection to this and we await further information from the City Council. One of the issue relating to this application is the new access road to the hospital. We are fighting to have this road available for everyone visiting the hospital, at present due to an agreement that we were not a party to nor were informed of the City Council would appear to have come to some sort of agreement with the hospital that this road only be for use of hospital employees and deliveries.

Another issue that comes up on a regular basis is speed of traffic and parking. We have been in discussion with the school about the issues that residents and through traffic face at drop-off and pick-up time. We have been assisted by the Parking Partnership with regards to these issues

and hope that with effort and assistance from all sides a change in behaviour can be achieved. In conjunction with the Parking Partnership we have an outstanding application of some double yellow lines at the junction of The Street and the B1008.

With regards speed of traffic we have a speed gun and a number of trained volunteers who can monitoring the speed of traffic. However as a result of the pandemic we have been unable to get out with the equipment this past year, however with the lifting of restrictions we hope to get this up-and-going again so if you are interested in being part of this and have some time to spare please let us know.

We are also in discussions with the Highways Panel as to physical things that can be done to slow the traffic down and/or deter through traffic. One of the issues of the Bloor development is that we feel that the village will be subject to rat-running from that development from anyone heading into Chelmsford or to the A12. Again we are trying to see if anything can be done to minimise the impact whilst not unduly affecting the convenience of residents. Pavement parking is also an issue. Very often it is to such a degree that it is blocking the pavement and people with prams, wheelchairs, mobility scooters and the like are unable to pass. Obstruction of the pavements in such a way is an offence. We are looking into ideas to prevent this. Before any major decisions are taken we will of course consult with residents.

Before I leave the issue of traffic I would also like to say that we are pleased that at long last a pedestrian crossing is being constructed across Essex Regiment Way. Quiet why it is taken so long is not easily understood, quite why the construction of it should take so long I don't understand – but at least it is now in progress!

As many of you will be aware the Cricket Club has left the village and the fence has come down. The Parish Council are in the final negotiations with the City Council for a new lease of the cricket field which we hope will be concluded very shortly, there are just a few legal issues to be dealt with. We have however managed in the interregnum to have the concrete blocks removed and a gate installed. We were able to take advantage of the Ping initiative and we have had an outdoor table tennis table installed on the playing field free of charge. We hope that this will be a useful community resource for all. We are also considering installing some outdoor gym equipment, however this will probably need to wait until the issues concerning the lease have been resolved. We will also at the time take possession of the pavilion and again we will consult on ideas for the use of the building, but have to point out that it is badly in need of repair so we will need to deal with that in the first instance. We are keen that this whole area is one that is available for the whole community.

The Glebe Field has been an issue that we have been concerned about during the past year. The Church of England are the owners of the land and without any notification to the Parish Council let it for the grazing of goats. This area is in the conservation area and we have been concerned about the fencing off of the area and the construction of sheds. Planning permission has now been given for the buildings, but we will continue to monitor the use of the area to ensure that it is compatible with is being in the conservation area.

On a more positive note I am pleased to say that our affordable housing project is progressing and Chelmer Housing our partner in this initiative will soon be applying for planning permission.

We continue producing our Parish Newsletter which is published on a quarterly basis. We are delighted that feedback continues to be very positive, and supportive of the initiative.

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.

Other initiatives that we arranged during the year have been the sessions of "Play in the Park" (when permitted) and we have recently arranged a Parish "Litter Pick" for the beginning of June. We have also engaged with both Macdonalds and Costa Coffee about the litter as much of it emanates from their customers. Both have been very responsive and have assisted in our litter picks with supplying staff to assist and vouchers for those who have taken part.

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 help the village and the community.

Thanks are also due to our County Councillor John Aldridge who I am sorry to say is leaving us as he has decided not to stand in the elections this week. John has been a faithful attender at the Parish Council meetings, given us excellent advice and helped us fight our corner on County issues. I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of the Parish Council and the residents to thank him for his help and assistance and wish him a very long and happy retirement. I would also like to thank City Councillors Mike Steel and Barry Knight who between them attend the majority of our meetings and are always willing to assist us and help us with City Council matters.

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. I can assure you she is an unfailing support and works hard for the Parish and its residents. I continue to get excellent feedback from those who Suzanne has assisted she is a real asset to the Parish Council.