

CHAIRS REPORT

PARISH MEETING 2022.

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

Last year we transitioned from Zoom back to in-person meetings.

Currently we have one vacancy on the PC. Our full complement is 9 councilors. As a result of the Community Governance Review that Chelmsford City Council has undertaken, at the elections next year the size of the Parish will be reduced and the complement of councilors will reduce from 9 to 7. This is as a result of the Channels development being removed from the Parish, this will obviously affect the tax base and reduce the amount of precept that the Parish receives from residents via the City Council. I was pleased that we managed to persuade the City Council to defer the decision about the boundary between us and Broomfield that runs directly through the proposed Bloor development. The City have agreed that this will be reviewed once the houses have been built.

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

The Local Plan is being reviewed by the City Council and this will need to be monitored closely. As a result of the Green Belt to the south of Chelmsford unfortunately our area is a prime area for further development. The City Council are calling for sites that will inform their future plans for developments.

In terms of the current Local Plan that was adopted in May 2020 one of major issues to affect the village is the proposed Bloor Homes development at the hospital. Currently Bloor are seeking permission for 512 houses, which is more than was allocated to this site under the Local Plan. Apart from the number of houses, one of the other issues 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 successful in having double yellow lines painted at the school to try to improve the parking situation at drop-off and pick-up times. The Parking Partnership have visited on several occasions to enforce the restrictions.

With regards speed of traffic we have a speed gun and a number of trained volunteers who can monitor the speed of traffic. However as a result of the pandemic we have been unable to get out with the equipment over the past two years, however we are now able to get this up-

and-running again. 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 which will exacerbate an already difficult situation. We are trying to get the Local Highway Panel to agree to part fund a destination survey. This type of survey is the evidence that we need to persuade the Highways Panel that there is a rat-running issue, and as a result get their help in trying to deter the through traffic using the village.

There has been a further traffic issue at the Channels development in terms of large HGV lorries using the RDR to access Bulls Lodge quarry. This is necessitated as a result of the bridge being removed over Generals Lane, which allowed them to access the A12. We have lobbied Essex County Council about this issue as the noise and disruption to residents has been intolerable as the lorries start at 5.00am or earlier.

We have now signed the lease on the Cricket Ground and also the pavilion. We will be consulting with the Parish about how we might use the Pavilion for the benefit of the community. There are however some works that will need to be undertaken before it can be in effect open to the public, and there are restrictions on the lease as to what use we can put it to.

The Glebe Field has been an issue that we have been concerned about during the past year. As you will be aware the tenants with the goats left the field several months ago. The Church of England are the owners of the land and we have been in discussions with them to see if the Parish Council would be able to lease it for the benefit of the community. You may also recall that there are some outstanding applications about a right of way across the land, these are still being reviewed by the City Council.

We also dealt with issues surrounding the grant of a license to operate a festival event at Wheelers Farm. Despite our submissions and those of others who were directly affected by the event and the resultant behaviour of those attending and against the advice of the Police the Licensing Committee did not agree to remove the license – they allowed the license to continue with the limit of 1,000 participants at events. Recently we have been advised of another application from a different organiser – Wheelers Farm themselves for more events this year. Once again we will make our concerns known to the Licensing Committee.

Our affordable housing project is progressing, but perhaps not as quickly as we had hoped as a result of some legal issues. 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 and other 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” and we have recently arranged a Parish “Litter Pick”. 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 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 (and City Councillor) Mike Steel and City Councillor and Barry Knight who between them attend the majority of our meetings and are always willing to assist us and help us with City and County 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 assistance and support over the past year. I can assure you that she 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.

Edith A. Robertson