

FELSTED ANNUAL ASSEMBLY
Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly, held on
28 April 2016
at 7:30 pm in the URC Hall, Stebbing Road, Felsted

Present: Councillor Graham Harvey (Parish Council Chairman), Diane Smith (Parish Clerk), Councillors Richard Freeman, Frances Marshall, Anna McNicoll, John Moore, Alan Thawley and 14 members of the public.

1. Introductions and Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Councillors Andy Bennett, Nicholas Hinde and Peter Rose, Peter Watson (Assistant Clerk) and County Councillor Simon Walsh. Apologies had also been received from Hazel Fox and Dr Andrew Hynd. Cllr Harvey began the meeting by introducing those members of the Parish Council present.

2. Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on 24 April 2015

The Minutes were approved and signed by the Chairman.

3. Chairman's Report

The Chairman reported on the Council's activities during the year including:

- The election in May 2015 which resulted in 2 new Councillors, Frances Marshall and Anna McNicoll taking office, followed soon after by co-opted member Stephanie Woodhouse.
- The Chairman and his wife enjoyed attending a Buckingham Palace Garden Party in summer 2015 and he thanked the Council for their nomination which marked his 30 years on the Council and 10 years as Chairman.
- The Council won the prestigious RCCE Village of the Year competition in 2015 and the Chairman thanked everyone for helping to achieve this important accolade. Signs as you enter the village now record this achievement.
- Following considerable concern regarding the possible coalescence of Felsted and Flitch Green, the Council is in the process of securing ownership of the land between the communities to be used as a Nature Area. The Section 106 Agreement with Enodis should be signed very shortly.
- The Council has received notification from Rev Colin Taylor that the churchyard is almost full and so will soon be 'closed'. The Council will accordingly take over maintenance of the churchyard and are also planning to provide a future burial ground for the village on part of the new Nature Area off Station Road.
- The Council has completed a number of projects over the last year including: the erection of a new street light in Garnetts Lane, a replacement noticeboard outside Linsells shop, the installation of windows in four of the village bus shelters, the re-erection of the Three Horseshoes sign at Bannister Green and the planting of many daffodil bulbs around the village. The Council have also installed a new pump on the pavilion showers and carried out very effective drainage work to the football pitches. The church clock was also refurbished and the Council made a contribution towards this work.
- Ongoing projects include paying for regular visits from Parking Enforcement Officers to improve traffic flow in the village and the creation of a Working Group to look into the possibility of setting up a Youth Council.
- The Chairman ended by expressing his thanks to his fellow Councillors for their sterling work.

4. Clerk's Financial Report

The Clerk explained that the Auditor was still verifying the accounts for the year

ending 31 March 2016 but she gave a summary of the draft year-end figures and highlighted certain items.

The Council began the year with a bank balance of £113,734. The Council's expected income had been increased by the receipt of £3,700 in grants this year plus £1683 in allotment rents and £1240 in playing field rents.

In addition to its regular expenditure, the Council had spent the following amounts on specific items: £8000 on the Felsted Neighbourhood Plan project (including the grant of £3000 from Locality), £1991 on the popular weekly Green Waste collection at Bannister Green (now taking place on a Sunday morning instead of Saturday), £2149 on a new street light in Garnetts Lane, £1200 on the pavilion shower pump, £950 on drainage works to the football pitches, £2056 on repairs to the play equipment and £1010 on the CCTV system in the playing field.

Expenditure totalled £65,992 leaving a closing balance of £128,796, a larger balance than last year because invoices had not yet been received for the new notice board and the playpark top up.

5. **Reports by the Parish Council's representatives on other bodies**

The full reports were available at the meeting and were read by their authors or by the Clerk.

Felsted & Ford End District Nursing Association

Penny Gant reported that the Association had formally closed during the year with all their funds being transferred to the Felsted United Charities.

Memorial Hall Committee

Hazel Fox reported that the longstanding rental arrangement with FKS Schools had ended following the closure of the school in July 2015. However this had opened up new opportunities for daytime hire of the hall. The end of the school contract had necessitated changes to staffing levels and Angela had now taken on the role of caretaker.

Felsted School have used the Memorial Hall car park at various times to help ease parking/traffic congestion problems. It is hoped to pilot a more permanent parking arrangement for their catering staff in the future.

General maintenance work continues as you would expect and there are plans to upgrade facilities and carry out major alterations to the back classrooms.

The Committee has welcomed 3 new members during the year and Hazel Fox thanked all the committee members for their tireless work and commitment to the Memorial Hall. She also thanked the hirers who use the hall on a regular basis and thus enable it to function as a central part of the village.

Felsted United Charities

Richard Silcock reported that donations had been made to Farleigh Hospice, Felsted Friendship Club, Essex Air Ambulance and Dunmow Blind and Housebound Club.

Grants had also been made to 16 residents of the parish.

He confirmed that funds had been received from the Felsted and Ford End Nursing Association when it closed.

The Crix Green Trust

Cllr Graham Harvey reported that the Trust had not received any applications for assistance in the last 12 months. They had however agreed to fund a defibrillator training session, to instruct residents in the use of the defibrillator which is kept in the village shop.

The Mission Hall and the adjacent cottage were being maintained in good order and new double glazed windows would be fitted shortly.

The Boteler Education Foundation

Cllr Harvey reported that the Trust had met once during the last 12 months due to

the very small income generated by the invested funds. A donation would shortly be made to Felsted Primary School for the purchase of books.

It was noted that the Trust was the second oldest Trust in Essex.

Tree Warden

Dr Andrew Hynd reported that 105 mixed native hedging whips, from The Woodland Trust, had been planted by volunteers, to partially screen the children's play area on Bannister Green.

Bakers Lane had been blocked by a fallen dead tree in December which he had cleared.

Footpath Wardens

Malcolm Raggett and Nick Pollard reported that most paths were walkable in the village although there are some problems with landowners not reinstating paths through standing crops. Most dog walkers continue to act responsibly and clear up their dog's mess but a minority don't bother or worse still bag the mess and then throw it into the hedgerow where it is an eyesore and takes a long time to decay. The "bag it and bin it" message needs to be reinforced. [It was agreed that the Clerk would place an article in Interface to highlight this problem].

A number of paths have had blockages. Where these are temporary due to plant/tree growth they are dealt with informally but the ECC Rights of Way Enforcement Officer is dealing with 2 cases where human intervention has caused the blockage. FP80 in Causeway End and FP44 in Bannister Green.

There have been a number of applications by landowners to divert paths in the past year. Where these are unchallenged the re-routing proceeds smoothly but an objection means that the application has to be decided by an Inspector and the process can take 9 months. There are also pre-application consultations happening regarding possible diversions of FP's 44,115,16,17 and 77.

Discussions are ongoing regarding the formation of a Bridleway Ring but at least one landowner is currently reluctant to allow the relevant footpath to be upgraded.

Playing Field Project Group

Cllr Alan Thawley reported that the Group had not met during the year because in practise the Council had largely taken over responsibility for the playing field. They do however expect to meet shortly to consider requests for additional equipment in the playing fields.

6. Felsted Neighbourhood Plan

Roy Ramm reminded everyone that work commenced on the NP in July 2014. The Group had met 21 times since then and held a number of well attended public workshops and consultation events. The Group had also undertaken a traffic survey, youth survey, estate agents survey and, with the assistance of RCCE, a recent Housing Needs Survey distributed to every house in the village. A huge amount of information had been collected and 7 work streams had been identified to take forward (Protect the Integrity of the Parish/Meet Future Housing Needs/ Protect the Historic Village Centre/ Health Services/ Provide Village Amenities/ Educational Excellence and Provision for Visitors). All the work streams are however very much interrelated.

It has become clear that if residents want to ensure the long term future of the surgery, dispensary, shop and post office we need to be pro-active in finding ways to develop these assets. This could be by deciding to support some development to help fund a village amenity centre. Doing nothing in terms of development was never an option and we now need to choose what delivers the most for the parish.

The rejection of the Uttlesford Local Plan by the Inspector has repercussions for the NP and we need to wait to hear what UDC will say about the requirement for housing in Felsted.

The Group are currently cataloguing the physical attributes of the parish and will be producing an 'asset map' and planning policy statements that help to preserve them.

The next major event is a Public Consultation, on Saturday 14 May in the Grignon Hall, Felsted School, to consider the results of the Youth Survey, Estate Agents Survey and the Housing Needs Survey and it is hoped that as many people as possible will attend and join in the discussions. Further details of all events and consultations can be found on the NP website.

7. Open Forum

The following matters were raised/discussed :

- a) New street light in Garnetts Lane – The Council were congratulated on finally providing this light after many years.
- b) Tour de France commemorative litter bins – The Clerk agreed to contact the Events Committee to check when these might be purchased.
- c) Parking at Watch House Green – Having installed a bus stop cage it was suggested that there was now less parking in Braintree Road but the problem had moved to Rayne Road.
- d) Public access along the lane adjacent to Chimes, Rayne Road, Watch House Green – Lord Rayleighs Farms had installed a gate topped with barbed wire to prevent access to this lane. The lane had been used by residents for at least 50 years, to access the footpath beyond, but the Clerk had established that it had never been shown as an official right of way. The Clerk had met Lord Rayleighs farm manager the previous week (on another matter) and had raised this problem with him. He was adamant that there had never been an official public right of way and that the gate/barbed wire would not therefore be removed.
- e) Watch House Green Neighbourhood Watch Area – It was noted that half the residents of WHG had now joined the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme.
- f) Footpath 80 – Concern was expressed that this footpath was still unusable. The Footpath Warden detailed the history of the problem and it was noted that ECC Highways Enforcement Officers were actively dealing with the matter. Two of the 3 residents whose land is affected by FP80, were willing to apply for an official diversion but the third resident was currently not in agreement.
- g) Causeway End / Jollyboys Lane South – Clearance of potential building plot – Three previous planning applications had been refused on this site and it had been submitted to the latest UDC Call for Sites for development. The owners had told neighbours of their intention to clear the site imminently, prior to submitting a new planning application. The site was a haven for wildlife including Great Crested Newts, birds, deer and plants. Accordingly Essex Wildlife Trust, Essex Police Wildlife Officer and UDC Planning Enforcement had all been contacted by concerned residents and the Clerk had written to UDC asking them to take action to prevent the clearance. One team of contractors had agreed not to start the work, once it had been pointed out to them that the clearance would be illegal at this time of year because of nesting birds. It was however feared that the owners might still try to clear the site and the wildlife would be lost.
- h) David Gregory thanked the Council for everything that they do for the village.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and the meeting closed at 8.10pm

Chairman April 2017