

FELSTED ANNUAL ASSEMBLY
Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly, held on
13 April 2017
at 7:00 pm in the URC Hall, Stebbing Road, Felsted

Present: Councillor Graham Harvey (Parish Council Chairman), Diane Smith (Parish Clerk), Councillors Richard Freeman, Frances Marshall, John Moore, Malcolm Radley and Chris Woodhouse, Roy Ramm (Chairman of Felsted NP Steering Group) and 5 members of the public.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Councillors Anna McNicoll and Nicholas Hinde and County Councillor Simon Walsh. Apologies had also been received from Hazel Fox, Richard Silcock, Malcolm Raggett and Dr Andrew Hynd.
Cllr Harvey began the meeting by welcoming those present.

2. Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on 28 April 2016

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 planting of many bulbs to brighten the appearance of the village in Spring
- The ongoing problem with the change to Stansted flightpaths bringing many more aircraft noise over the village. The Council is leading objections to the CAA Review of the Flightpath Changes and Cllr Andy Bennet was thanked for his considerable contribution to this important issue
- Planning pressure remains considerable, including the very recent Catesby Appeal for 55 houses off Braintree Road and the respective Local Plan proposals for 1100 new homes on land adjacent to the racecourse at Great Leighs and 8700 homes to the north of the village known as "West of Braintree". The Council has strongly opposed all these proposals.
- A Youth Councillor, Poppy Mifsud, has been appointed and takes an active part in Council discussions. She is heading a project to provide an outdoor table tennis table in the playing field
- The process of securing the Nature Area between Felsted and Flich Green is progressing slowly but once finalised it will prevent coalescence of the two communities and provide a worthwhile amenity (which may include a future burial ground).
- Formal closure of Holy Cross Churchyard has been confirmed by The Privy Council and the Council will officially take over responsibility for maintenance of the churchyard on 1 May 2017. A Working Group has been set up to oversee this new responsibility and contractors will be engaged to regularly cut and strim the area.
- The Council's website has been expanded and the Chairman urged villagers to register to receive the Council's regular e-mail News Updates
- A range of new play equipment has been installed at Ravens Crescent which is much appreciated by local residents
- The Chairman ended by welcoming a new Councillor, Malcolm Radley and expressing his thanks to his fellow Councillors for all their hard work during the year.

4. Clerk's Financial Report

The Clerk explained that the Auditor was still verifying the accounts for the year ending 31 March 2017 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 £128,796. The Council's expected income (Precept unchanged at £70,000) had been increased by the receipt of £4,101 in grants this year plus £1783 in allotment rents, £500 in playing field rents and donations of £2000 (including a £500 donation for temporary use of the playing field car park by the

builders at Abbeyfield). **Income, excluding VAT repayment, totalled £78,404.**

In addition to its regular expenditure, the Council had spent the following amounts on specific items: £10,624 on new play equipment at Ravens Crescent, £5000 on the Felsted Neighbourhood Plan, £2442 on the popular weekly Green Waste collection at Bannister Green, £2690 on tree works and hedge cutting, £3185 on topping up the playpark in the play area, £764 on planting bulbs and flower tubs, £571 on rodent control at the allotments and £302 on a teak bench to commemorate winning the Essex Village of the Year in 2015.

Expenditure, excluding VAT, totalled £72,687 and the closing balance was £133,075.

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.

Memorial Hall Committee

Hazel Fox reported that there had been major changes to the Hall following the vacation of FKS Schools, and the 2 former classrooms have been transformed into two bookable rooms (the Heather and Fern Rooms).

The Committee had welcomed 3 enthusiastic new members during the year and the PC representative also changed to Anna McNicoll, following the departure of Alan Thawley to Scotland. Hazel Fox thanked all the committee members for their tireless work and commitment to the Memorial Hall.

Felsted United Charities

Richard Silcock reported that donations had been made to Farleigh Hospice, Felsted Friendship Club, Marie Curie and Dunmow Blind and Housebound Club. Grants had also been made to 12 residents of the parish.

The Crix Green Trust

Cllr Graham Harvey reported that the Trust had not received any applications for assistance in the last 12 months. Requests from Felsted residents towards educational purposes would be welcomed. The Mission Hall and the adjacent cottage were being maintained in good order.

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. No donations had been made during the year. It was noted that the Trust was the second oldest Trust in Essex.

Tree Warden

Dr Andrew Hynd reported that the parish trees are, in the main in good health. Two packs of mixed native hedging whips had been planted by volunteers, following the line of the track on the northern edge of Bannister Green, to enhance the appearance of the area.

Footpath Wardens

Malcolm Raggett reported that most paths are walkable in the village although there are a few problems with landowners not reinstating paths after cultivation and householders deterring walkers by various means.

There have been a number of applications by landowners to re-route 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. The unavailability of Footpath 80 has been mentioned in several previous annual reports but a change in ownership has now resulted in an application to re-route this footpath being made and, subject to the legal processes, it is hoped that this will result in the footpath becoming available for walkers again in the next few months.

Discussions are ongoing regarding the formation of a Bridleway Ring but one landowner remains reluctant to allow the relevant footpath to be upgraded. Without this consent the proposal cannot be taken forward.

Playing Field Project Group

Cllr Anna McNicoll reported that the Group had not met during the year because in practise the Council had largely taken over responsibility for the playing field. However they expected to meet shortly to consider requests for additional equipment in the playing fields.

6. **Felsted Neighbourhood Plan**

Roy Ramm reported that the NP process is proving far more complex and time-consuming

than envisaged and he thanked his colleagues on the Steering Group for their continued commitment and fortitude.

Trying to take account of the community's priorities (rejecting further housing development, protecting community amenities and addressing the traffic congestion issue) whilst adhering to the NP process, that requires a positive approach to sustainable development, and reacting to the continuing unsettled position of the Uttlesford local Plan is, to say the least, challenging.

Two further major Consultation Events will be held in June [CLERK'S NOTE: Subsequently postponed to July because of the General Election announcement] to present a set of integrated policies which will previously have been shared with the PC.

UDC are supporting the NP Group by providing an excellent advisory Consultant and a detailed Heritage and Character Assessment of the whole parish is being produced by AECOM (via an application to Locality). Two non-conflicted consultancies are submitting tenders to produce options for a suitable site for a new Community Hub within the Parish, to protect local services.

The time of the monthly Steering Group meetings has been changed from 4pm to 7pm (second Monday) to encourage more public attendance and a Facebook page will be set up to offer easier access and opportunities to comment for residents.

Finally, it is important to record that in the absence of and prior to any mandate offered by a successful referendum on the emerging NP, the NP Steering Group has remained and will continue to remain entirely removed from any and all planning applications. Those are matters for the PC.

Further details of all events and consultations can be found on the NP website.

7. Open Forum

The following matters were raised/discussed :

- a) Lack of Bank Interest on Council funds – The proposal to move some of the Council's funds into an interest bearing deposit account had been investigated in detail about 18 months ago. After consulting with the Internal Auditor and bearing in mind the very low interest rates available to the Council, it had been agreed that the additional staff time involved in transferring funds between accounts would offset any income gain. It had therefore been agreed to keep all the funds in the existing Barclays Current Account.
- b) Felsted United Charities – The origin of this Charity was questioned and the Chairman explained that the Mead Family, who lived in Felsted many years ago, had left funds to be used for the relief of the poor.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and the meeting closed at 7.24pm

Chairman

April 2018