



Little Braxted Parish Council

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of Little Braxted held in The Braxted Bakery, Witham Lane, Little Braxted on Tuesday 23rd May 2017 at 7.00 p.m.

Present: Kit Speakman, Parish Council Chairman (in the Chair) and twenty members of the public.

MINUTES

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Pauline Player.

2. To Agree and Approve the Minutes of the Meeting held 17th May 2016

The minutes of the meeting held on 17th May 2016 were agreed as a true record.

3. Chairman's Report

The Chairman reported on the last year as follows:-

Once again it is my pleasure to recap the events of the past year.

From a Parish Council point of view it has been a very busy year, and one in which we have attracted significant amounts of external funding to try and deliver positive projects for the village.

We started with a grant towards the fete to celebrate the opening of the cricket pavilion in our neighbouring parish of Great Braxted. This enabled us to feed all those attending, who were honoured not only by the presence of our then M.P. but also by a flypast by the Royal Air Force !

Although we try our best, both through official and unofficial channels, to keep our residents informed we had been conscious that we perhaps needed to understand better our residents' concerns about, and wishes for, the village we all live in. So further grant funding enabled us to undertake a Parish Plan.

Whilst many of the responses were to be expected (concerns regarding speed and volume of traffic, number of HGV's passing through, etc) we were surprised that, overall, there was a more relaxed approach to limited, small scale, development. Hence the current Housing Needs Survey which was distributed yesterday.

The need for the Housing Needs Survey was given added pressure by the changes to the Maldon District Council Local Plan, the policies of which now include the statement that development in rural communities such as ours will be determined by the demands of individual Neighbourhood Plans. We have neither financial or physical resources to enable such a small Parish as this to complete a Neighbourhood Plan so will be relying on the independent Housing Needs Survey and the goodwill of our principal landowners to deter predatory development, whilst recognising there may be a limited need for additional housing.

Also during this last year we have benefitted from employing a part-time litter picker. Again grant-funded, and we are hoping that this funding will continue for a further three years. Even just one hour a week has made a difference to the volume of litter in the verges and hedgerows, and we hope this will continue.

Our last piece of grant funding has enabled us to purchase a defibrillator. We hope, subject to Greene King's approval, to site this at the Green Man, with the support of its

landlord Adam. Being able to use a defibrillator quickly can save lives, and whilst we would wish it was never needed, knowing it is there is a reassurance to us all.

There have been some issues we have had no control over – particularly the restrictions on the Colemans Bridge sliproad following the tragedy. It affects us all but its re-opening is in the hands of Highways England. As soon as we know, you will.

We were also unsuccessful in our attempts to have the road leading to Colemans Bridge from the Old Schoolhouse renamed. We had wanted it to be Little Braxted Lane throughout; partly to avoid confusion with Witham Road, Great Braxted and partly because the word Lane might deter the drivers of larger vehicles from attempting to use it.

The results of the Parish Plan survey have added greater weight to our requests for traffic calming measures, and we are expecting new signage from Essex County Council very shortly.

Looking ahead, the biggest challenge to our community is likely to be the new route of the A12. The fore-runner of the options, at least as it passes Witham, would seem to be a new route to this side of the existing road. Given that the gravel quarry and the river will be in the way, any new route could cut across our Parish. Indeed surveys are already taking place. Watch this space.

As a Parish Council we rely on our residents who put so much of themselves into helping us. Mandy Chapman for organising Neighbourhood Watch (even if it didn't prevent her camper van being stolen), Jon Aldis who keeps the Village Green and War Memorial tidy, Heather Bendall for being our litter-picker, and Gary and Sarah for letting us hold our meetings here at the bakery. A big thanks to them all.

In addition the members of the advisory board of the Little Braxted Educational and Community Trust spoke regarding the support the Trust could give to both individuals and organisations within the Parish and encouraged the public to suggest potential schemes for consideration.

4. Public Forum

Members of the public expressed concerns regarding future residential development in the Parish. The Chairman and others spoke of the impact of the lack of an adopted Local Plan, and the emerging policies which set the number and style of properties in any particular Parish as being determined by each Parish's Neighbourhood Plan. With a minimum two-year timescale to produce such a plan, and a likely cost running into tens of thousands, the Council had decided to undertake an independently conducted Housing Needs Survey, which could be used as evidence to either support or oppose future development. Residents were encouraged to complete and return the questionnaire which was solely for completion by Little Braxted residents and those working in the Parish.

A member of the public asked if the hedges at the War Memorial junction could be cut back and the Clerk was asked to contact ECC Highways Department.

5. Closure

The meeting was closed at 7.55 p.m.