

Little Waldingfield Parish Council - Annual Report 2017/2018

The Parish Council has had eleven meetings during the period, keeping councillors busy. Over the majority of the time it has operated at full strength, however a vacancy for a new councillor has recently arisen. Notice of the vacancy has been posted on the village website and also in the notice board opposite the telephone box.

Actions on planning during the year

There have been seven major planning applications submitted, including proposals for a barn conversion, a new stable block, two new agricultural buildings and two new residential dwellings, all of which were supported by the PC; a proposal for a new rear link extension was not supported. The remaining applications were to discharge previously agreed conditions, for minor works and for management of various trees.

Other actions during the year

Litter pick

The annual litter pick was undertaken on Saturday 18th March. As usual a large number of rubbish bags were filled.

Free dog poo bags

This initiative has continued during over the year, so dog poo bags remain available to all dog walkers from the telephone box.

Defibrillator Training

Following installation of the defibrillator in Jan 2017, and subsequent commissioning, a public defibrillator training session was arranged, in May, at which 30 people attended. The defibrillator is regularly inspected to ensure it is always in working order.

Water damage in The Street

During the summer, a small dip in the road surface near the telephone box gradually became larger. This was from water escaping from a burst pipe below. Anglian Water (AW) were advised several times and finally came out to repair it. However their delay resulted in the telephone box being sprayed with muddy water and stones from passing vehicles, particularly lorries, causing some damage to the paintwork. After repairs had been completed, AW agreed to have it repainted and the box was restored to its former glory.

Closed churchyard 'tip test'

In September, Parish Councillors carried out a 'tip test' in the closed churchyard, for which the parish council is responsible, and with PCC permission also in the open churchyard. There were no unsafe headstones found in the closed churchyard however several open churchyard headstones were assessed as unsafe and the PCC was advised. Representatives of the PCC cordoned off the area and laid 7 headstones down, to ensure public safety.

Joint Local Plan Awareness

In October, the PC held a very well received public meeting to introduce the Babergh/Mid Suffolk draft Joint Local Plan (JLP), identify some of the policy options and point villagers where to go to obtain more information. Many villagers subsequently went to the final BDC JLP drop in session, so were able to obtain more information and then respond to the consultation.

Accidents within the village

In September, a fibre broadband telegraph pole was demolished when a car leaving the village failed to make the Haymarket corner. This followed a similar accident there in January 2017 and two councillors investigated whether some preventative action could be taken. After many months of negotiation, and with grateful thanks to Suffolk County Councillor Colin Spence, the following actions have been agreed and should soon be actioned:

Add 'bend warning signs' and 'Slow' road markings to both sides of the bend;

Renew the road centre white line;

Paint 30 mph 'roundels' to the road and

Increase the reflectivity of the matt black bollards in front of the Haymarket cottages.

Council Budget

The parish council agreed a budget of £8,415 for 2018/19, equating to a 3.9% reduction in precept.

Clive Memorial Funds

No monies were spent from this fund during the period and the balance remains at £1,950.

Mobile Speed Indicator Devices (SID)

The triple SID sharing scheme with Great Waldingfield and Chilton became operational during the year, for two weeks out of every six. You may have noticed that when you pass the device it flashes up your speed so you can see how fast you are going. If it flashes red you are going too fast but I'm sure that never happens to anyone here! LWPC pays a small administration fee to GW. This helps towards the costs of maintaining the devices, keeping the batteries charged and moving them from location to location.

Issues Facing the Parish Council

The PC has a range of responsibilities which include maintaining the closed burial ground, several footpaths around the village and the street lighting. It is also consulted on planning applications within the village and can either support or not the plans submitted. The PC is not, however a planning authority and cannot refuse planning permission. That is the responsibility of Babergh District Council who is our local planning authority.

Speedwatch

The voluntary team, under the guidance of Allan Wells, our local speedwatch co-ordinator, regularly monitored the speed of drivers through the village. Those drivers caught exceeding the 30mph speed limit were reported to the police. In some cases letters were sent and in extreme cases offenders were visited by a police officer.

Footpaths/Grass cutting

Following a successful first year of operation since assuming both budget and grass cutting responsibilities from Suffolk County Council, the PC renewed the contract with D Gotts.

Front Churchyard Wall

After some delays caused by obtaining permission to undertake the work, the wall pier was rebuilt in May. The opportunity was taken to get the bricklayer to check the rest of the wall for damage, which happily was slight, but further minor pointing was undertaken at the time in order to prolong the life of the wall.

Closed Churchyard Trees

As reported last year, our tree survey identified that a fair amount of surgery was required, for public safety reasons. After some delay permission was finally received and the work completed last November.

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

This new piece of legislation takes effect from 25th May and the PC is working to ensure it is compliant.

Other Matters

The Swan Inn

Last year, after the pub was placed in the hands of the receiver and following a short period of temporary management whilst a buyer was found, The Swan Inn finally closed its doors in April 2017. The new owner, Mr Justin Grainger, purchased the Swan 'with the intention of creating a viable pub of which the village can be proud'. There have been some setbacks, not least of which is the cost of renovations. However, Mr Grainger has given a statement, which is available to read on the village website, that he remains committed to reopening the Swan Inn and is currently liaising with his architects to draw up plans to facilitate this. Once these are available he has stated they will be shared with us at an open event. The Swan remains on Babergh's schedule of community assets.

Police Matters

The village was targetted by a number of criminals over the night of 22nd / 23rd August, with eight properties subject to burglaries or attempted burglaries, from sheds and outbuildings. A public meeting was arranged by the PC at which PCSO Laura Mansell provided security advice and what to do in the event of an incident.

Parish Council Clerk

Following the retirement of Dave Crimmin, Simon Ashton was appointed as his replacement with effect from 1st October 2017.

Neighbourhood Plan

Following public meetings and consultation with villagers, the PC council resolved to pursue a local Neighbourhood Plan. A dedicated steering committee comprising both councillors and villagers was established, chaired by Councillor Tim Sheppard. The steering committee has met regularly since its inception and progress is being made towards the ultimate goal of having a LWNP. Actions taken so far include:

- Obtaining funding for the project
- Appointing an outside consultant to help with the process
- Issuing a questionnaire to every resident over the age of 11 years so that everyone could give their views on how the village might develop over the next 20 years
- Analysis of the responses undertaken by the consultant and considered by the steering group
- Beginning to appraise the village to understand its distinctive character
- Launch of a photographic competition to obtain illustrations of notable views, architectural features and other areas of importance within the village and surrounding parish

The next steps that will be taken are:

- To complete the village appraisal
- Obtain further funding so that a Locality survey can be commissioned
- Hold workshops/drop-in sessions to inform and consult with everyone in the village. Two sessions have already been planned for June 9th and July 7th. Further details of these will be published nearer the time.
- Formulate a vision for what the village might look like in 20 years time
- Start to put together a draft NP

This is a major piece of work and will likely continue throughout this year before being completed.

That concludes this annual report about the work of the Parish Council in 2017/2018. I am happy to take questions if there is anything you want to ask and Tim Sheppard is also here and can take questions about the NP.