

LITTLE CLACTON PARISH COUNCIL
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD AT THE
YOUTH AND COMMUNITY CENTRE ON MONDAY,
13th APRIL 2015 AT 8.00 PM**

PRESENT

Councillor Peter Watson in the Chair

**Councillors Mrs M Balbirnie, P De Vaux Balbirnie, R Bellamy, G Bush, J Cutting,
J Dunnett, Miss L Gray, Mr B Ward, Mrs E Ward and Mrs A Wood.**

And many residents.

Apologies : Councillors Mrs H Smith and R Smith, County Councillor A Erskine.

1. CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT

Again as in previous years, we have spent much of our time dealing with planning applications. The current increase in applications is mainly due to the failure of Tendring District Council to have their Draft Development Plan approved and adopted by Government, leaving the back door wide open for every landowner and developer to try and push ahead with development on their parcel of land. The submission draft document proposed considerable development on land within and abutting our Parish Boundary and in later discussions has indicated that 'Green Wedges and Protected Green Spaces' they said would be **robustly protected** are now vulnerable. Without a new adopted legal Development Plan, Planners are referring to the adopted 2007 Local Development Plan and NPPF and also to the draft 2012/14 draft Local Development Plan – in some cases it ends up 'a pick and mix' of all three. This situation has left us in an unenviable position and although we have asked Officers to come to our meeting and provide some guidelines they have not appeared or provided any guidance or direction. This Council take their responsibilities seriously regarding both long term planning within the parish and the areas abutting our boundary as well as responding to each individual application.

Unfortunately whatever our response may be, the Tendring District Council Planning Team have the final decision regardless of any valid objections they receive, Two recent planning applications in Holland Road are typical examples. A recent application to develop an area in the centre of the village has created considerable attention. Residents have a democratic right to object to any planning application if they consider that the infrastructure, schools, doctors, highways and other amenities are not sustainable if that development were approved. I cannot understand however, that large developments within and on our immediate Parish boundary have passed us by without a murmur from residents. These developments will have an even greater effect, due to their size, on that same infrastructure that some residents are now claiming to be concerned about. There are further developments being considered around us, that if they come to fruition will have very serious consequences on our Village, not just in its character and size but in fact that we would be absorbed into being a suburb of Clacton.

Finally, on the subject of planning, this Council considers all applications in the same way be it for a simple porch or a larger development of dwellings. A Planning Working Party consisting of Parish Councillors meet and discuss each application using their knowledge, experience and an overview of the whole parish, then agree a response. This response is then presented to the full council at the next monthly meeting and a vote of all members decides on the final response that goes to Tendring District Council. Once again I will make clear, that our responses, recommendations and objections are not necessarily accepted and Tendring District Council Planners and the Planning Committee have the final say.

At the very end of last year we took responsibility of ownership, as Trustees, of the Millennium Green. The legal handover had taken a lot of perseverance and a considerable amount of time but is now completed. A Management Team has been formed and will be responsible for the everyday running of the Green and it is hoped that they will organise events encouraging residents to make the best use of the pleasant open space. In the season there are some very attractive areas where wild flowers grow with mown pathways allowing access all around the Green and into the tree area. There

is a lot of work to be done to fences and the pond area and it will be interesting to see the progress. I wish the Team good luck as there is a lot to do.

Perhaps less attractive but very important never the less, is the work of the Business and Finance Working Party. They ensure that the Council stays solvent, prepares the annual budget used to set our portion of the Council Tax. They have controlled our expenditure and maintained all the services and facilities without increasing our budget. In addition to those responsibilities they ensure our insurance cover is adequate, prepare and submit audits, arrange PAYE and workplace Pensions to comply with our legal duties.

The Council has supported the Village Hall Management Team with Grants towards grass maintenance and the installation of a CCTV system. A Monthly grant is awarded to the Thursday lunch club where a range of residents meet once a week for a chat and enjoy a subsidised lunch together in the Village Hall. A grant is also awarded to St James the Parish Church to cover the burial ground maintenance. Unfortunately, Audrey our Parish Clerk, was taken seriously ill in the middle of last year and has only been able to take a back seat on everyday items but has been there to keep us in line and legal using her many years experience. Audrey is now in her 28th year of service to the Council, quite an achievement and to acknowledge her continued service we arranged an afternoon tea party for her. She was so very happy to see so many of Parish Councillors of the past and was even pleased to see some of those who were still serving on the Council. Audrey retires at the end of May when the new Parish Council comes to Office. Ginette has had to take on more responsibility due to Audrey's poor health and will I am sure, miss Audrey's experience when left solely in charge in May.

In Conclusion, I take this opportunity to thank all my fellow Parish Councillors for donating their time and enthusiasm to look after the many aspects of our village. My thanks also to District Councillor De Vaux Balbirnie the only one of our District Councillors who bothers to attend our meeting and represent us at District and Essex County Councillor Erskine, the first Essex County Councillor to regularly attend our meetings and represent in a very long while, and also for his attempts to settle many of the points raised regarding our village roads.

Last but not least my thanks go to Councillor Bellamy, the vice Chairman, who is not only a steady influence but has become a very good friend outside of the Council. There are going to be a lot of changes in the Council in May as several current Councillors will not be standing for re-election. It is refreshing to hear that new candidates are being nominated for election in contrast to the previous two elections where residents had to be co-opted onto the Council as there was insufficient interested residents to form a new Council.

Once again my thanks for your support and help in all we have achieved over the last four years.

2.REPORT FROM REPRESENTATIVES

(a) LITTLE CLACTON VILLAGE HALL

Councillor Dunnett read out the following report :

After several years of renovations and improvements to the Village Hall, the committee has during the past year concentrated on the Playing field.

Work on clearing the perimeter hedges has been completed. A load of surplus spring bulbs were given by a local garden centre and planted along one length of the field .

In February a number of trees and shrubs were planted on two sides of the field. Several volunteers and children came along and helped with the work. Refreshments were provided for free by a local supermarket.

On the field a small football pitch (approximately half size) suitable for children, is available for hire. The playground is being completely resurfaced with artificial grass. This will enable the very popular play area to be in use all year round. The surrounding fencing is also being renewed with metal fencing to the whole area.

A completely new CCTV security system covering the building , playground, and car park has been installed. It has already had a beneficial effect.

The Village Hall committee are very grateful to the parish council for the financial help and support given to the Hall.

(b) PASSENGER TRANSPORT

Councillor Gray reported that the meetings were now local again and she will be able to attend in future.

(c) TENDRING DISTRICT COUNCIL

Councillor De Vaux Balbirnie gave out and read a written report detailing events during the last year. He mentioned Planning, Solar Sites, Wind Turbines, St Osyth Priory Sites, Thorpe Road Site, Clacton Gateway Site, Pot holes, road surfacing, Flooding, traffic speeds, Weeley Bridge Weight restriction, Part Night Street Lighting, Residents complaints and the Upgrade of Weeley Crematorium. He stated that as one of our two District Councillors and a member of Little Clacton Parish Council, it had been a pleasure to work alongside Peter Watson, the Chairman, Mrs Owens and Mrs Loach the Clerk and the Assistant Clerk and all Parish Councillors who are doing a great job for the benefit of the people of our village. Unfortunately, many residents do not realize the amount of work that the Parish Council and committees undertake, including highways, lighting, footpaths, finance, planning, assets, and crime etcetera. Sincere thanks must also go to the residents for their continued support of the Parish and Councillors and to all those who organize events for the benefit of the people of Little Clacton. All your efforts really are appreciated.

My sincere thanks to you all for your help and support over a year that has brought with it no end of hurdles and issues which have needed addressing. By working together, it makes the District Councillors job very much easier and as we go into an election, I have put myself forward for re-election and together with Mavis by my side would like to have the opportunity to serve you again.

(d) Essex County Council

Essex County Councillor Erskine did not leave a report.

(e) TDALC

The job of the Tendring District Association of Local Councils (TDALC) representative is to attend the bi-monthly meetings on behalf of Little Clacton Parish Council, and to report back to the Parish Council with any important information from that meeting. It is a valuable meeting point at which all Local Parish and Town Councils are represented, and where information is exchanged, and views and occasionally support is sought.

It is reassuring to know that all of the local Councils in the Tendring district are facing the same problems as Little Clacton, such as Highways, diminished Policing, Planning, Finances etc. Any major Local concerns, such as the St Osyth Priory and Alresford Development applications are brought to general attention and discussed. Unfortunately, with many situations we are often unable to do anything more positive than offer support and guidance to each other, as Tending District Council has the ability to over-ride our concerns and make an arbitrary decision on the matter.

The general consensus of opinion, however is that we cannot give up but simply must keep on trying.

(f) Parish Fields

Councillor Bellamy reported that there had been another busy year at Plough Corner, with all the facilities being used on a regular and continuing basis.

The revenue stream from hire fees and other activities continues to enable Parish Fields to be self financing regarding maintenance and we have again been able to make a contribution towards the capital cost of the new pavilion extension and upgrade.

The pavilion now provides larger adult changing rooms and also new separate changing rooms and facilities for Officials, junior team and girls teams. The next stage will provide new adult shower facilities, and we seek grant aid to finance this part of the work. On completion we will have a superb pavilion both in terms of exterior appearance and also interior services.

The playing fields have again benefited from further drainage work and this, together with the

excellent playing surface, which is much appreciated by the various teams using Plough corner. As good as any in the district.

The tennis court and all weather playing surface continue to be available, free of charge, to local residents.

Of our other activities we had two excellent and growing Classic Car Shows organised by Clacton Classic Car Club.

The car boot season was disappointing although we covered costs. As a result we will change the format for the coming season to make the venue more attractive to sellers and thus buyers in due course.

The Youth and Community Hall continues to host a growing number of users which now include two camera clubs, art groups, a bridge club, yoga classes, kettle bell exercise, choir and band practice and commercial driver training courses. The Hall is also used by friends of St James, Clacton Animal aid and for private receptions, stamp and coin fairs.

(g)Meadow Millennium Green

The Meadow Millennium Green has been a very special area within the village since it was purchased from the Essex County Council in 2001.

The total area of the Green, which is in the centre of the village, is under 2 acres and is made up of meadows, paths, a wooded area together with a small pond including significant “natural “areas where people can enjoy nature and wildlife first hand. It is designated/protected making a positive contribution to the local environment and respects the established character of the area and which can be enjoyed by people of all ages and physical abilities. The land is protected by wooden and wire fencing, as is the pond, as well as bushes/hedgerow on the boundaries, and entry is via specific entrances.

The original Trustees have been caretakers of the Green over the years but it had become more difficult to manage without financial help from the Parish Council for assistance with the grass and hedge cutting, and there are now major tasks which require carrying what it has to offer but also to protect the area from further deterioration.

Following an AGM in November 2013 and an EGM in January 2014 and, following consultation with the Trustees, it was decided that the Little Clacton Parish Council would take over the Trust and a mountain of paperwork subsequently followed which had to involve Natural England and the Charity commission.

Nothing could be done until the changes had been confirmed by Natural England and this was in February 2015. As a result, the Parish Council has now taken over the Trust with a management committee being formed to administer the daily running of the Green on behalf of the Trust. The Parish Council agreed that they would continue to take up the annual funding for the grass and hedge maintenance.

The Committee would consist of two serving Parish Councillors and a minimum of two residing Parish Residents and, as a member of the last Trust, Councillor M Balbirnie and Councillor Ward who is also a Parish Councillor. The first meeting for residents interested in joining the committee was to be held on 4th March when Carla Davies of the Community Voluntary Services from Colchester attended to offer advice on the way forward on a number of tasks which needed to be addressed and with which volunteers could be involved.

At this meeting there were seven people in attendance as well as Carla. Discussions took place over the fencing on the Elm Road boundary together with improvements to the pond area. Following this meeting the first committee meeting took place on Wednesday 11th March, at the Village Hall and the committee was installed as follows:

Mavis De Vaux Balbirnie - elected as Chairman and secretary

Brian Ward – Treasurer

Sue Dass – Committee Member

Shirley Thatcher – Committee Member

Lynn Gray - Committee Member

Jean Quartermaine – Co - opted Member

Alan Quartermaine - Co - opted Member

(h) Hubbards and Harvey Charity

The Chairman read out the following report:

When I took over the responsibility of these two trusts, I quickly found out that due to previous Officers moving from the the District or not being with us any more, bank statements and other correspondence relating to the charities for almost four years had been lost. I eventually made contact with two previous trustees and managed to get a bank mandate agreed and now receive statements and correspondence. Most of the investments, Government Stock, had been made over thirty years ago and some are now reaching their redemption date. Next problem, cheques covering their redemption are made out in the name of the investor so they cannot be paid into the charity account as the investors name is no longer on the mandate plus in some cases the investor is no longer alive. Any dealings on these investments is through the Government Treasury and their wheels move very slowly. I am going to propose to the new Council in May, that I continue to manage these charities until these investments are properly registered with the Treasury and the Charity Commission notified of the changes of the Trustees. The broad objectives of both charities are: to provide elderly Little Clacton residents, who are considered in need, a small donation towards the cost of their Christmas celebrations. Councillor De Vaux Balbirnie proposed that Councillor Watson continued to keep on running the charity, Councillor Cutting seconded and it was resolved.

Last Christmas two Village residents received a Christmas bonus and a goodies bag.

3.REPORTS ON PARISH COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

(a) Maintenance and services

The Chairman reported that the maintenance of all Village equipment cost less now than 7 years ago. It has been reported that a bus shelter at Meadowview needs redecoration. Enquiries as to the extent and cost of the work to be done will be made.

i)STREET LIGHTS – Councillor Ward reported that lights were generally repaired in a group to save money and 2014/15 was a year in which the Parish decided to replace a number of lights. These were mainly lights that were old and beyond 'repair'. The decision was made to replace firstly a number of lights in Holland Road and Elm Road. They were replaced with more efficient units which give a much better light, cause less light pollution and should last so much longer.

Two further phases of replacing footpath lights has completed the work specified in the lighting survey. For 2015/16 and with monies provided in the budget, the final phase will be to remove the old lights located on the grass verges in Harwich Road.

ii)FOOTPATHS – Cllr Gray stated that footpaths at the Blacksmiths Arms, and at Holland Road were all being worked on. Channels have now been dug.

(b) CRIME PREVENTION

Councillor Cutting reported that it had been a year in which the policing in our area has been restructured on a couple of occasions and is still being altered while this report is being presented. There is no doubt that the modern way of policing seems to be from a more controlled stance and is in my view more reactive than proactive. All crime reports are now not given to the parish council, we indeed have to go on line to the Essex Community Messaging site to access our crime figures which are now combined with Weeley and given in numbers with no definition in detail of the said crimes. If going on those numbers and as they are the only figures we have to go on, then it seems the Village has had a reasonably low crime rate. The Police in the last few months have tried a new initiative with what is called a Street Meet in the Village and that is where our local policeman is available for one hour per evening per week at the village hall car park to take on board any local problems, however this is in the early stages and is only in place if the police are not busy elsewhere. I did ask for an update from the police as to if it is working but as yet have not had a reply. My own understanding is that as one would imagine the police are not always there as they are as you can imagine busy on other business. All I can say is that the police have actively asked sll members of the public if online to join the Essex Messaging Site so that the Police can email any issues directly to the people in that area.

(c) Highways

No report had been left.

4. ITEMS RAISED BY RESIDENTS

Councillor Watson said he had received five emails from different residents objecting to the proposed development in the Village. He found it interesting to note that some had used the opportunity to have a general moan and others stated how long they had lived in the Village, be it 10 or 14 years and in one case as high as 100 years involvement. The feeling of belonging somewhere is good, but when looking at the name at the bottom of the correspondence, found it difficult in most cases to bring to mind what if any contribution they had made to the Village during the last 22 years while he had been on the Parish Council. So what had brought about this change of interest? Following a study of development in the Village, it was interesting to note that if you live in a property built since 1950 you are lucky that the Parish Council and residents of that time had the foresight to approve these developments thereby changing a small hamlet into a village. It is probably even more interesting to note that without those developments many of us would not have the privilege of living here now, let alone objecting to any further development.

Another resident accused the Council of not doing anything about the 165 dwelling planning issue, and said that he thought the Council were incompetent.

Councillor Wood explained how regardless of the comments and recommendations made by the Parish Council to Tendring District Council Planning Department on an application under consideration, our response is often completely disregarded. Without an adopted Local Development Plan in place there were no guidelines to ensure the proposals were suitable for the long term benefit of the village.

Councillor Cutting expressed his objection to the 'shame' comments directed at the Parish Council members and in the press relating to the proposed development in the centre of the village. Residents cannot complain about Council workings if they the residents cannot be bothered to attend the Parish Council monthly meetings that are open to the public. At best, only two or three residents bother to turn up at a Parish Council meeting and even then it is usually because there is a planning application that may affect themselves. This Council works hard for the Village and community and can be proud of what it has achieved over the years.

Mr Barrington Fuller thanked the Council for hearing his case, even though we refused his application. He stated that he didn't plan with money in mind, but what he thought was best for the village. He said he had thought carefully about what was needed.

Another resident brought up drainage issues.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There being no further business, The Chairman closed the meeting at 9:20pm

Chairman
18th May 2015