

LITTLE CLACTON PARISH COUNCIL  
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD AT THE  
YOUTH AND COMMUNITY CENTRE ON MONDAY,  
8th APRIL 2019 AT 8.05 PM

PRESENT

Councillor John Cutting in the Chair

Councillors R Bellamy, D Botterell, J Smith-Daye, L Gray, S Rowland, J Taylor and B Ward,  
District Councillor Bray

- 1) **APOLOGIES:** Councillors M Balbirnie, P De Vaux Balbirnie, L Moules, M Reed, J Rowland and District Councillor Brown

## 2) CHAIRMANS REPORT

They say what goes around comes around or that things go in full circle. Well that certainly applies to planning in Little Clacton and across Tendring. In Little Clacton at the start of this council's term we were fighting the proposed development of 98 properties in the street amongst others with that 98 being the largest.

Thanks to the inability of TDC to have a Local Plan in place left us to open to the much hated Government Rule in the NPPF that a Presumption in Favour of development would apply.

Well here we are some four years on and still no Local Plan in place with the Government moving the goal posts to allow more numbers of houses to be built, leaving our Village amongst others at the mercy of opportunist developers. What a mess!

We will keep fighting mass development applications along with those that we feel is not in the best interest for the Village, like the Centenary Way application that went to appeal. That application was refused as a result, in my opinion of the constant objection from this Parish Council from the very start of the application process.

So what has this Council achieved in its term of office?

We have replaced our entire street lighting to LED. That has led to huge savings on our electric bills and severely reduced very costly expense and maintenance of the old lights.

We experienced an invasion of travelers on the Harold Lilly Playing field next to the Village Hall, but due to swift action from the council and members spending an all-night vigil at the gates the travelers moved the very next day.

This Council has now placed Height barriers to Millennium Green, Parish Fields with the Village Hall providing barriers at Harold Lilly Playing Fields.

We have had constant battles with ECC with regards to pavements, potholes and smashed keep left signs. There is now a glimmer of hope in so far as an initiative from ECC to devolve responsibility to minor repairs to pavements and hedgerows to the Parish should enable us to action the problems quicker.

We as a council have installed new notice board in the Village to a more Village friendly colour rather than the old corporate looking grey boards.

We have made huge savings on maintenance cost due to our 'when required' policy and not a retainer payment.

We have again made savings on our grass cutting contract by applying a pay when cut policy instead of a monthly payment.

We have also completely changed our Christmas Lights to LED which are now environment friendly resulting in lower running cost, a cost that Frinton Bathrooms in the Village have generously paid since taking over the shop.

We have renewed all the football goal posts and nets at Parish Fields with s.106 monies.

We have completed the final stage of the Pavilion Upgrade at Parish Fields, a project that we inherited from the last Parish Council.

We are now engaged in the final stages of on the upgrade and modernisation of the Tennis Courts area of Parish Fields which will have great benefit to the Village and will be looking to start the work in the very near future.

So I think that this Council and the residents of Little Clacton should be proud of our achievements over the past four years for I certainly am as your Chairman.

As I said at the start what goes around comes around and so with planning we are back where we started four years ago having to fight off opportunist developers coming in with a Presumption in Favour application.

If re-elected for another term I will continue to do what I believe is right for the Village of Little Clacton.

Before finishing I would like to say a special thanks to resident Dave Birch and his team of speed watch volunteers for giving up their time to try to make Little Clacton a safer place.

So now on a finishing note I would like to thank all the support this council have given me.

I would like to thank our District Councillors Mike Brown and Jeff Bray, Peter Balbirnie and his team at the Village Hall, Mavis Balbirnie as my deputy and Chair of the Millennium Green, Ray Bellamy for his management of Parish Fields, and the one person we all depend on to help us do our job Ginette our clerk.

One final person I would like to thank for putting up with all the phone calls, knocks on the door, meetings in the day and evenings, my wonderful wife Gina.

Thank You

Councillor J Cutting.

### **3) REPORT FROM REPRESENTATIVES**

#### **4) VILLAGE HALL ANNUAL REPORT**

No report.

#### **5) MEADOW MILLENNIUM GREEN**

No report.

#### **6) PARISH FIELDS**

Another busy year at Plough Corner with all the facilities being used on a regular basis.

Football teams continue to enjoy the new pavilion facilities and more teams have already expressed a wish to use plough corner as their home ground next season.

Clacton Classic Car Club, again, held two successful car shows and are booked again for this summer.

Cancer Research UK held their Relay for Life event on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> July 2018, and this year's event is scheduled for 13<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> July.

The Youth and Community Hall continues to host a wide range of leisure activities which now include Yoga, two Art Groups, Baby Signing group, Bridge Club, Whist Club, Radio Club, Choir and band practice, Camera Club and also Commercial Driver Training Courses.

The Hall is also used for coin, stamp and collector's fairs as well as seasonal fairs, quiz nights and committee meetings.

Councillor R Bellamy

## **7) TDALC**

I have attended all but one of the TDALC meeting this year. Good things come out and gems of information occasionally. It is helpful to hear what other parishes think. He reported that both the Secretary and Chair have stood down this year, and it has an unknown future.

Councillor D Botterell

## **8) TENDRING DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **a) District Councillor Bray:**

It has been a difficult year personally and a busy one as a councillor. The loss of my mother in June last year and the passing of my wife at the beginning of the year, have obviously made it a year I would rather forget. Once again I would like to thank all of the Parish Council members, and many Little Clacton residents for their thoughts and support throughout those long and dark days, particularly during my wife's struggle with cancer.

I take both pride and pleasure from the knowledge that I have been able to continue with my council work representing you, my constituents effectively despite recent personal events.

During the last year and indeed the last four years, I have worked on behalf of a number of local residents on a wide range of issues. These include such things as abandoned cars, boundary disputes, land ownership, fly tipping, noise nuisance, road condition, parking/speeding issues etc. in both villages of my current ward.

Most of these have been resolved, although a few are ongoing. As was the case last year, and indeed since my election much of my case work consists of issues relating to other authorities such as ECC and most particularly Essex County Highways. Whilst I am unable to directly resolve these, since they are not within the remit of Tendring District Council, I can, working on behalf of residents, lobby and argue to rectify particular problems, and I do. It is very frustrating that I am often unable to achieve a desired result when dealing with other authorities. There is still more to do and I expect new challenges in the future.

It is also true to say that the majority of my effort in the last 12 months and indeed the last four years has been related to planning and local plan issues. I suspect that this will continue for some time yet. As a member of the local plan committee I have been loud and clear in my opposition to over development, particularly the development of green land and our green gap. I have attended every meeting bar one of the committee since my election as well as an ever growing number of both public and non-public councillor briefings. I have attended meetings of the local plan committee of Colchester, Braintree and Chelmsford again this year, since our plan remains inherently connected to theirs.

I remain the most vocal member of the committee, having spoken more often than any other member, save the Chairman.

The local plan is an extremely complex document of several hundred pages. I am sure that it is advancing albeit slowly. In fact, the local plan was slightly ahead of time until the inspector requested clarification on some of its issues. Now, with changing rules and moving goal posts, we seem to be at a standstill. I will continue to push for a faster fairer local plan, whilst doing all I can to defend the hard won local plan requirement of 550 new homes per year, rather than the alternative substantially higher figure desired by the new NPPF and many developers.

A very recent hearing (Edenside, Kirby Cross) which I attended and spoke to, has just supported my position. This will hopefully help with future hearings of which I expect there will be many. Along with my colleague District Councillor Everett, I attend and speak to many appeal hearings, in an effort to ensure that our position is represented robustly. We are often the only Councillors present.

The acceptance of a working five year housing supply by the Council has been an enormous and

universally beneficial step forward. Along with just one other councillor, I have been working on this for well over two and a half years. It has been difficult in the extreme and complicated beyond belief. I am however, very proud that in the end, our argument was finally accepted despite the initial and prolonged resistance offered by others. The task now is to defend that situation which in the face of new legislation will be far from easy. It is imperative however, that we do all that we can to prevent the unfair and damaging 'presumption in favour' of development. I expect this to be an ongoing fight for some time to come, with or without a local plan.

Planning remains a large and difficult area. Obviously we need to build houses, but how many and where will continue to be an issue for many years to come. The current position of government, is that an additional 1.2 million new homes need to be built in the UK. This is clearly the underlying pressure on all planning authorities like Tendring. In the longer term however, this number may grow even higher. The alternative party to the current Government are suggesting that the figure should be around twice that (2.2 million). Obviously any increase for whatever reason will massively and detrimentally impact our area.

**b) District Councillor Brown:**

2018/19 was again a busy year for rural councillors in part because of Little Clacton and Weeley seemingly being focused upon for disproportionate development.

Jeff Bray and I accept that we need more houses, however, where they are placed are important to residents. It is our opinion however, Little Clacton and Weeley have received more than their fair share of development leading to councillors working hard to defend rural values and trying to keep our villages 'villages'.

My personal duties this year, apart from Parish Council duties, have been with District Council. Last year I served on the licencing committee changing taxi and betting bylaws, however, just as I was gaining knowledge on the subject I was transferred to a scrutiny committee where I still serve.

Moving Councillors around is done from time to time to inhibit cronyism.

Earlier this year I volunteered for the Planning Committee which I enjoy 'with reservations'. I joined to protect our area. However, if you are predisposed on a particular development in your area you are not allowed to participate on its outcome which is sometimes a hindrance.

The past four years were my first term on District Council. In that time, apart from normal duties I managed to start the ball rolling on making the Little Clacton and Weeley bypass safer by having serious money spent on it after too many fatalities.

Earlier this year Richard Ransome retired as Weeley tree warden having devoted years not only as tree warden but unpaid gardener. I have volunteered to take over part of his duties as stand in tree warden. I have helped Richard for many years in his duties although I do not have his knowledge but I will try and carry on his good work. This small service I also offered to Little Clacton Parish.

As most are aware, this will be my last attendance as District Councillor for Little Clacton as there is a boundary change. The electorate willing I will leave you in the good hands of Jeff Bray.

I must state it has been a pleasure to attend Little Clacton Parish and I wish you success in the future.

Cllr Mike Brown

**9) ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL**

Essex County Councillor Erskine did not leave a report.

## **10) REPORTS ON WORKING PARTIES**

### **a) MAINTENANCE AND SERVICES**

The new grass cutting contract has been a success. We have a much better relationship with the contractor, who informs us when they are to cut. Maintenance carried out on an ad-hoc basis has resulted in less repairs over all. The benches have been repaired and upgraded or replaced when necessary. Councillor S Rowland

### **b) STREETLIGHTS**

It has been a busy four years that have seen the old unserviceable lamp posts on the Harwich Road greensward lifted therefore cleaning up the area, the light which never shone near Harwich Road Convenience Store lighting the way for those late night and early morning trips for the days necessities. All the lights which are accountable to Little Clacton Parish Council are now LED with a rating of 18w as opposed to the old orange lights consumption of 58w a saving of 40w for every light with a longer life expectancy. We are now monitoring the lights as they fail, many are replaced with a warranty which has been generously extended by our contractor A & J Lighting who has assisted us throughout the journey. We are now investigating the second generation of LED lighting which would retrospectively replace the whole unit, some are now possibly 40 years old, instead of just the light fitting. This with ever increasing cost of power is saving us approximately 66% per annum on costs and has considerably lowered the carbon footprint of the village, we lead all other Parish and Town Councils in this so a reason to be proud of the achievement. We change the lights when we have three out of service as this reduces the necessity for call out charges to the parish funds. We have also seen a rise in residents phoning in when a light is out, again this reduces the carbon footprint as I do not have to drive around in the dark checking for outages as often as was necessary in the past. Essex County Council fall way behind our expectations often taking years to replace a bulb, this needs to be addressed, if only they would listen to us and even have the courtesy to reply to our correspondence and explain why this is.

Councillor M Reed.

### **c) FOOTPATHS**

Our footpaths and Bridleways are well used and are regularly overgrown. When reported to the District Council it goes on their cutting schedule and gets cut back eventually.

Councillor L Gray

### **d) PASSENGER TRANSPORT**

There are 2 sometimes 3 meetings a year, which the bus companies attend but it never seems to involve Little Clacton.

### **e) PLANNING**

This has been an exasperating experience with 'presumption in favour' allowing development to build properties which, in the Planning Inspectors words 'would never have passed if a Local Plan were in place'. The Planning Department seem to follow a rule book which distorts this way and that to suit each individual application often leading to Approval where the one adjacent was refused. Russian roulette at its best. Certain Councillors have worked tirelessly to try to remedy this, but it is difficult where each application is judged on its own merit with no regard to the calamity of the cumulative effect. This has seen Little Clacton's housing growth go beyond reason, little of which is affordable,

one of the main terms used to drive forward this disproportionate growth of development within the village. There is little work opportunity locally so new residents have to travel often by car to work in distant locations running the peak travel pinch point of Weeley roundabout to Frating roundabout, spending precious time in vehicles with engines running with little progress, an environmental disaster. I am not confident that this infrastructure issue was thought through when allocating new sites for development. The 'big' urban style development was cut from 165 to 98, something we must keep a very close eye on, so whilst not an outright victory, it was a massive reduction in a development that will change the nature of the village in perpetuity. I am in hope that now we have reached the five year supply then development outside of settlement area, green gap / arable land ., intrusion of natural habitat, back land development., unsustainable, not in keeping with rural setting etc. can be seen as a credible reason for refusal, but I do not hold these hopes too high.

## **11) CRIME PREVENTION**

This has been our third year without a PCSO and the crime figures have remained constant. Violence outweighs the other crimes, although they are all seemingly minor crimes compared to other areas.

A spreadsheet of two years, detailing all the crimes and percentages is shown as appendix A.

## **12) HIGHWAYS**

## **13) ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There being no further business, The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.50pm

Chairman  
13<sup>th</sup> May 2019