

Little Oakley Parish Council

Clerk: Vikki Howard 3, Rectory Road, Little Oakley, Harwich, Essex. CO12 5JX

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 15th April 2015

Cllrs present: Cllr Howard, Cllr Wrycraft, Cllr Steer, Cllr Griggs and Cllr Hunnaball, Cllr Griffiths and Cllr Jackson

15/030 Apologies for absence

There were apologies from Cllr Cullen and County Councillor Erskine

15/031 Signing of the minutes from 9th April 2014

It was Resolved that the minutes from the Annual Parish Meeting 2014 were a true and accurate record.

Proposed: Cllr Wrycraft

Seconded: Cllr Griffiths

15/032 Chairman's Annual Report

Cllr Howard read out his chairman's report

See appendix 1

15/033 Finance Annual Report

The clerk read out the annual finance report

See appendix 2

14/034 Public Speaking – there are 10 minutes for public speaking.

There was no public speaking

Meeting closed 19:17

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Appendix 1

Chairman's report 2015

The past year has been a mixture of the routine issues that are the responsibility of the Parish Council.

Parish Street lighting

Having installed our first LED light last year, we have this year committed to implementing a rolling programme of replacing our street lights with LED lights. We had an assessment of the condition of our lights carried out by our contractor and have now replaced the 8 street lights that were in the worst condition, with LED lights.

We will continue to roll out LED street lights by replacing street lights that break as our first priority and then replacing the worst remaining ones each year until we reach our street lighting budget for that year.

On this basis we expect to replace all the Parish owned street lights with LED lights within the next 3-4 years.

This roll out will update our street lights from a set of aging lighting stock that were coming to the end of their life expectancy and simultaneously reduce our power usage by around 42% (from 35w to 20w per light). In addition to the environmental benefits, this is expected to lead to long term savings in electricity costs to the Parish. Positive feedback has been received from residents regarding the LED lighting that we have replaced to date.

While our Parish Council run street lights remain on all night, areas of our village have been affected by Essex County Council's part night lighting policy. When Essex County Council announced plans to trial LED street lighting we invited the portfolio holder, Cllr Rodney Bass, to visit our village to see our lights in action. He accepted our invitation and duly attended, showing great interest in our lights and our experience of them so far.

We hope to have further discussions with ECC at a future point to look to address the Essex County Council part night lighting that affects some areas of the village.

Parking

Parking continues to be a contentious issue in the village with particular problem areas being the Harwich road (near the former Methodist Church) and on the corner of Rectory Road outside Ye Olde Cherry Tree.

Following further concerns about this being raised by residents, we revisited previous options considered and tried to identify potential new solutions. Unfortunately, none of the solutions that we looked at have proved practical. We then passed the matter to our County Councilor, who in turn found it similarly hard to resolve, and there is therefore no change in the ongoing parking hotspots.

Neighbourhood Watch

The Little Oakley Neighbourhood Watch scheme continued to encounter difficulties in obtaining the promised support from the Clacton based Tendring Neighbourhood Watch that was the parent group for the whole of Tendring. The promised signage didn't materialise and there was little or no response when our local coordinator tried to contact them to progress the local group.

The local coordinator subsequently resigned and the group has in effect ceased to exist. I would like to thank Sam Rowley for her efforts in setting the group up and trying to get it off the ground.

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Community Police

Following a policy change at Essex Police, PCSO's were withdrawn from routine attendance of Parish Council meetings. This led to a poor and delayed communication of local crime figures to local residents and the Parish Council.

Police street meets were introduced, and after a shaky start where Little Oakley was not included in the schedule, police street meets are now held outside Ye Olde Cherry Tree. PCSO Matthew Ladkin usually attends these and provides a good interface with the local community.

Broadband

The Parish Council has continued to monitor the poor quality broadband service in our village and has engaged with relevant authorities to raise our profile. This has been reasonably effective, and we had a regional director from BT and the officer leading on broadband at Tendring District Council attend a Parish Council meeting to listen to our concerns and update us on their progress.

Bus shelters

Our bus shelters were repainted again this year and routine repairs were made to keep them in good condition.

Mayes Lane

Following several years of problems with loose chippings from surface dressing in Mayes Lane, I wrote a strongly worded letter to Cllr Bass at Essex County Council requesting that they did not put further surface dressing down on Mayes Lane and that they instead considered resurfacing the road with tarmac. Essex County Council responded positively and duly resurfaced Mayes Lane with tarmac, thus solving the problem.

War memorial

We had the war memorial cleaned prior to the Remembrance Day Service to ensure that it was in good condition for the service.

Playground

We reviewed and rationalised our playground inspection and maintenance in order to improve maintenance and the reporting of inspections.

Repairs were made to wet pour edging around two pieces of equipment and single railings were replaced after instances of vandalism resulting in them being ripped out. Additionally, the two cradle swings were recently replaced with new ones.

Insurance

We reviewed our insurance and changed insurers to provide equivalent insurance for a 3 year contract saving the council around £1100 during the life of that contract.

Speeding

Speeding continues to be an issue within the village, particularly on Harwich Road and Rectory Road. We sent councillors to a speed camera presentation and demonstration at Elmstead Market Parish Council with a view to considering setting a speed watch group within our village. To do this we would require around 10 local volunteers to operate the scheme and we will be reviewing this in the coming year.

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Closing Remarks

Many thanks to the clerk for her work during the year particularly in negotiating improved value on contracts and on managing to obtain responses and attendance of key external representatives. Additionally, I would like to congratulate the clerk on passing her Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA) qualification. This would allow us to invoke the General Power of Competence, which would give us greater powers to undertake community ventures such as running Community shops, Community pubs etc. if required.

I would like to thank Caroline Thomas for her work on the parish council prior to her stepping down, and particularly for her work as one of our two planning officers, and for being our main liaison with the Two Village School. It is hoped that Caroline will continue to be a liaison officer between the school and the Parish Council.

It is with regret that we are losing a very long serving parish councillor who has chosen to step down after 34 years of service including 19 years as chair. Val Wrycraft has done a great deal for the village both as a councillor and in other roles. Val was rightly recognised for this work with a Pride of Tendring award in 2012. Val is an excellent example of someone who has served the local community in order to benefit the community, but being very modest has shied away from recognition for all her work.

On behalf of the Parish Council I would therefore like to thank Val for her 34 years service on the Parish Council, to recognise that she will be greatly missed, and to say that she will be welcome back if she wishes to return to the Parish Council again in the future.

Finally, thanks go to all councilors for their work over the last year.

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Appendix 2 – Finance Annual Report

Finance statement 2014/15

Little Oakley parish Council started the financial year with £6507.14 carried forward.

During the year we spent £15114.79 and had income of £13775.01 which leaves £4993.36 carried forward at the end of the 2014/15 financial year to the 2015/16 financial year.

In the last financial year we saved some money by signing up to a 3 year contract for our insurance and by changing our web hosting to a local company.

We have started a rolling programme to replace Parish owned lights to LED. We have already changed 8 lights to LED. In order to fund this programme for the 2014/15 financial year, we had to vire money from other reserves. In the 2015/16 financial year we have raised our precept from £11500 to £13000 to pay for the replacement of streetlights to LED.