

Little Oakley Parish Council

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

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 6th April 2016

Councillors present: Cllr Howard (Chairman & District Councillor), Cllr Jackson, Cllr Steer, Cllr Griggs and Cllr Hunnaball

Also present: 1 member of the public and ECC Cllr Erskine

16/035 Apologies for absence

There were apologies from Cllr Cullen, Cllr Griffiths, Cllr Attrill and Cllr Churchwood

16/036 Signing of the minutes from 15th April 2016

It was **Resolved** to accept the minutes from the annual meeting held on 15th April 2015 as a true and accurate record.

16/037 Chairman's Annual Report

See appendix 1

16/038 Finance Annual Report

See appendix 2

16/039 Public Speaking

There was no public speaking

Meeting closed 19:15

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Appendix 1

Chairman's report 2016

The past year has been a mixture of the routine issues that the Parish Council handle, and the planning of a significant project planned for the coming year.

Councillor Changes

At the May 2015 elections, long standing councillor Val Wrycraft stepped down after 34 years of service on the Parish Council, with 19 of those spent as chair. Val's experience is greatly missed and she would happily be welcomed back in the future.

We have been joined by new councillors Dave Attrill and Tracy Churchwood who have settled in well and proved a positive addition to the council.

Contracts

During the last year we have made further changes to our service providers which in turn has maintained service levels but significantly reduced our costs in those areas.

James Martin now carries out our grass cutting at the church yard and various small areas around the village. This change has saved the council over £650 per annum.

We switched our electricity supplier for our street lights from Eon to SSE which reduced our street lighting electricity costs.

Street Lighting replacement programme

We have continued our ongoing rolling streetlight replacement programme to change all of our streetlights to LED. This year we changed a further five, four in Harwich Road and one in Mayes Lane. This means that we have now replaced more than half of our streetlights with LED's and we are on target to complete the replacement programme in May 2018.

The LED replacement programme has proved very popular with residents, as they have a brighter and more focussed light on to the road and footway.

Additionally, they have the advantage of significantly reducing our maintenance and running costs

Bus Shelters

We carried out the usual routine maintenance of bus shelters, which primarily involved the replacement of the roof felt on the bus shelter opposite the old Post Office in Harwich Road.

Essex County Council also recently replaced the metal cantilever bus shelter opposite Seaview with a new wooden bus shelter including a seat and a window to see the bus coming. ECC gifted the bus shelter to us on completion of the works and residents are now able to sit down in the dry while still being able to see the bus coming.

Planning

During the last year we have seen three significant planning applications within our Parish.

We saw an application for 60 houses to be built on the field opposite Seaview with access from the Harwich Road. This was strongly opposed by local residents along with the Parish Council and our District Councillor. This application was REFUSED by Tendring District Council and the subsequent appeal by the applicant was REFUSED by the Planning inspector.

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An application to build 8 houses on the Harwich Road between Foulton Hall corner and the existing houses before Seaview was also REFUSED and the subsequent appeal of the applicant REFUSED.

We currently have a new application for 13 houses to be built in what appears to be a back land development off Mayes Lane which involves demolishing an existing property to create access. This will be discussed by the Parish Council in tonight's full council meeting and will be decided by Tendring District Council in due course.

Broadband

It is worth noting that this year saw the last of our village's cabinets upgraded to superfast broadband. There has been a good uptake of the superfast broadband services locally, but it is important that residents ask their Internet Service Provider (ISP) to switch them to superfast broadband as otherwise they will remain on the old copper service by default. Worse still, it is not unusual for the old copper service to actually become even slower than it was before when the new fibre enabled cabinets are connected. The superfast services will generally cost more than remaining on the existing copper cabinet, but if residents shop around there are competitive deals available if they are prepared to change their ISP.

Bank

We completed our switch from TSB to Unity during the year. This enabled us to use online banking and to move away from our cheque based payments. The new online banking service is used by many local councils and provides robust authorisation and payment procedures which are not readily available to councils from other banks. This has made it far easier to pay suppliers in a timely fashion and removed the need to post cheques.

General Power of Competence (GPC)

Little Oakley Parish Council declared its eligibility and adopted the General Power of Competence (GPC) at its meeting on 22nd July 2015. This power remains with the council until the Annual Meeting following each ordinary election; it can then be readopted at that Annual Meeting if the council is eligible.

There are two criteria which a council must fulfill in order to be eligible to adopt the GPC:

- At the time when the GPC is adopted, at least two-thirds of the total seats on the council must be held by members who stood at the last ordinary election or a subsequent by-election.
- The clerk to the council must hold either the Certificate in Local Council Administration or an equivalent qualification.

GPC is a power of first resort enabling parish councils who have adopted it 'to do anything that individuals generally may do', that is, very broadly, anything that is not otherwise prohibited by law. This also enables us to run community ventures such as shops and pubs.

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Playground

This year has seen us carry out routine repairs and maintenance of our playground.

After spending some considerable time trying to obtain a key for our bin in the playground following the change in maintenance contractor, Cllr Harold Griffiths has now made two keys for the bin. This has made it far easier to empty the bin in the playground.

After having fixed various edging of the wet pour surfacing in recent years, we will shortly be carrying out a project to replace the entire wet pour surfacing at our playground. Additionally, we will be replacing the roundabout as the existing one is very old and it is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain. This is a significant project which will cost almost £23,500. We have obtained a £15,000 grant from CIF response and will fund the rest with S106 money and a Parish Council contribution. This work will be undertaken in the next few months.

Closing Remarks

Many thanks to the clerk for her work during the year particularly in negotiating further improved value on contracts and on successfully obtaining £15000 of funding towards our upcoming playground project.

I would also like to thank all Parish Councillors for their hard work and contributions in their areas of responsibility over the past year.

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Appendix 2

Finance Annual Statement 2016

During the financial year, Little Oakley Parish Council changed bank accounts from TSB to Unity Trust Bank, which is an online bank. We were able to do this due to changes in legislation which allows Parish Councils to make payments electronically. This now means that the Clerk/RFO and any Councillor (as long as they are registered) can check the accounts at any time.

This new bank account allows the Clerk/RFO to submit payments and requires councillors to authorise them. This has enabled the finance reports to be accurate rather than approximated if the bank statement had not arrived!

This financial year saw Little Oakley Parish Council start with a total of £5133.36 in the bank.

During the financial year we changed electricity supply contracts from EON to SSE saving us £114.59p (14.9%).

We also changed our grass cutting contract which has saved us £530 (70.2%)

£682.80 was spent on repairs last year compared to the £89.40 this year

This year also saw the introduction of the Clerks Pension.

The closing balance at the end of this financial year sees Little Oakley Parish Council with a closing balance of £7283.40 of which £3959.83 is in allocated reserves leaving an unallocated reserve total of £3323.57