

FELSTED ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY
Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly, held on
21 March 2019 at 7:00 pm in the URC Hall, Stebbing Road, Felsted

Present: Councillor Graham Harvey (Parish Council Chairman), Diane Smith (Parish Clerk), Councillors Richard Freeman, Nicholas Hinde, Alan Mackrill, Frances Marshall, John Moore and Chris Woodhouse, Heather Read (Assistant Parish Clerk), District Councillor Alan Mills, Roy Ramm (Chairman of Felsted NP Steering Group), Hazel Fox (Chair of Felsted Memorial Hall Committee Warden), Dr Andrew Hynd (Tree Warden), Richard Silcock (Felsted United Charities) and 6 members of the public.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Councillors Andy Bennett, Malcolm Radley, Peter Rose and Stephanie Woodhouse, District Councillor Marie Felton and County Cllr Simon Walsh. Cllr Harvey began the meeting by welcoming those present.

2. Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on 26 April 2018

The Minutes were approved and were signed by the Chairman.

3. Chairman's Report

The Chairman reported on the Council's activities during the year as follows:

- Pressure from developers to build in the village continues to increase with the Planning Inspectorate recently overturning a previous appeal decision and giving approval for 8 houses to be built in Bannister Green. The PC continues to fight such proposals and object to applications within the village because of their impact on already stretched resources such as the doctor's surgery, primary school and traffic congestion.
- The Council appointed a new Assistant Clerk in December 2018, to support Diane Smith, and Heather Read has settled into the position and is proving to be an asset to the village.
- Work on the Nature Area has commenced and more details of what has been achieved on this special project will be provided later in the meeting.
- The Council's Finance Committee oversees the annual budget and much of this is spent on maintenance around the village such as hedge and grass cutting, tree maintenance and the upkeep of the car parks, toilets and playing fields. The Chairman of the Finance Committee is Cllr John Moore and I can assure everyone that the finances could not be in safer hands.
- The current 4 year term for the Council comes to an end in May and it is not too late to put your name forward if you are interested in becoming a Councillor. After 4 years as a Councillor Stephanie Woodhouse has decided to step down as has Nicholas Hinde. Nicholas has served as a Councillor for the past 10 years and was well known for giving much thought to a situation before making a well-judged comment. As Chairman of the Highways Committee he also dedicated much time to making Felsted a safer place to live, work and travel through.
- The Chairman ended by expressing his thanks to his fellow Councillors for all their hard work during the year. On average he judged that each Councillor was likely to spend at least 70 hours a year attending meetings of the Full Council and Committees, reading reports and correspondence and representing the Council on charities and village organisations. All undertaken with enthusiasm and a smile but with no pay packet at the end of the month.

4. Clerk's Financial Report

The Annual Parish Assembly was being held earlier this year, because of the Parish Council Election on 2 May. The Council's financial year did not end until 31 March so the Clerk explained that all figures would only cover the year to date.

The PC opening bank balance on 1 April 2018 was £136,537.

Income: The PC received a Precept of £70,000 plus regular income from allotment and playing field rents totalling £2104. This year they also received grants totalling £1100. These consisted of £1000 from our Uttlesford District Councillors towards the cost of purchasing computer tablets for Councillors use at PC meetings plus £100 from the Stansted Community Trust towards financing an Armistice Centenary event. Other income included £4426.57 from

Felsted Playing Field Committee which had disbanded. These funds would be used to provide additional facilities at the Playing Field in the future.
Income (excluding VAT) to date totalled £77,386.

Expenditure: During the past year the Council has spent:

£5011 to maintain more than 70 street lights throughout Felsted which are owned by the PC, £2620 on extensive tree works and hedge cutting (mainly at the allotments and playing fields), £7092 on general grass cutting, £1212 on grass cutting and maintenance at the churchyard, £3726 on resurfacing part of Woodleys Car Park, £1105 at the playing field (landscaping the area to the east of the pavilion and installing a new cover over the septic tank), £ 370 on operating the two CCTV camera's in the Playing Field and £ 506 on planting the flower tubs.

Expenditure (excluding VAT) to date totalled £61,995. The bank balance as of 28 February was £151,928.

Felsted Nature Area Account - In April 2018 about 33 acres of land in Station Road were transferred to the PC to create a Nature Area. Enodis the previous owners provided the PC with £162,771 to fund this scheme for the next 20 years. These funds have been placed in a separate bank account and they are ring-fenced to ensure that they are only spent on the Nature Area project. Details of the works carried out at the Nature Area will be provided elsewhere during this meeting but to date £14,397 has been spent and additional income of £4440 has been received from the harvesting of the mature Willows on the site. On 21 February 2019 the Nature Area Account bank balance was £152,814.

5. **Reports by the Parish Council's representatives on other bodies**

The full reports were available at the meeting and were read by their authors or by the Chairman or Clerk.

Memorial Hall Committee

Hazel Fox reported that the Memorial Hall Committee had decided that the hall needed substantial refurbishment to enable it to continue serving the community and it's needs. The local community and hirers were invited to submit ideas and in summer 2018, a sub-committee visited various village halls that have gone through the refurbishment process to get further ideas. To start the ball rolling, the Committee installed an industrial dishwasher for the kitchen because many hirers had requested one. In the Autumn a team of Architects, who are experienced in community projects, carried out a feasibility study and initial plans have now been drawn up and will be on display at the AGM on 26 March. This is an ongoing project which is in its early stages and securing funding will be the next step.

The Hall is busy with bookings and a new young person's drama group has been set up and is very popular. Sadly, the Pantomime had to be cancelled this year due to cast members ill health.

With the demolition of Edwards House next to the Memorial hall, the building of two 4-bedroom houses commenced. The building company were asked to respect the car parking area which is for hall users only and, on the whole, they have been considerate.

Lastly, I would like to thank the committee for their tireless commitment to the Memorial Hall throughout the year.

Felsted United Charities

Richard Silcock reported that the Felsted United Charities committee met once in the last 12 months. Donations were made to Felsted Friendship Club, Dunmow Blind and Housebound Club, Marie Curie and Farleigh Hospice. Grants were made to 9 individuals in the Parish and a grant was also made to the Citizens Advice Bureaux to assist a parishioner.

Crix Green Mission Trust

Cllr Graham Harvey reported that the Trust had met twice over the last year. The buildings of the Mission Hall and Cottage remain in good order. Plans to build an extension on the side of the Mission Hall, to provide modern toilets and a kitchen, are progressing well and quotes are being obtained to undertake the work.

Botelers Education Foundation

Cllr Graham Harvey reported that the committee had met once in the last year. The charity is the second oldest charity in Essex and it holds a very small amount of funds for the use of education within the parish of Felsted. No funds have been distributed during the year.

Tree Warden

Dr Andrew Hynd reported that the Parish tree stock is healthy and in tidy order. There have been no reported issues with TPO-listed specimens over the past year. Hedgerows beside public footpaths are trimmed and maintained in most cases and there have been no fallen trees causing obstruction to our pavements or paths -- despite the recent squally gusts! This will be my last annual report as Parish Tree Warden. For personal reasons, I am unable to continue in the role. I wish my successor well and take this opportunity to thank the Council - especially the Clerk Diane Smith - for all their help and consideration.

The Chairman thanked Dr Hynd for all the work that he had undertaken as Tree Warden over the last 10 years. Anyone willing to take over this important role should contact the Clerk.

Footpath Warden

Malcolm Raggett reported that the parish footpaths and bridleways are generally in good order with most land owners maintaining the rights of way on their property. There are exceptions where a few farmers do not restore routes after cultivation or householders deter walkers by various means, but these instances are thankfully few. One of the longer-running blockages has been FP108 near Pond Park Farm, however an application to re-route several rights of way in this vicinity has recently been granted by Essex County Council so we await positive developments. Footpath 80 at Trewint, Causeway End, has been in dispute for some time. The new owner has successfully applied for a re-routing of the path around the perimeter of the property but the right of way has been temporarily suspended due to building work. Reinstatement of the path is expected around the middle of 2019.

Essex County Council is responsible for erecting finger posts showing rights of way when they leave a road but en-route signage requires local effort. Many of the posts and route markers were erected about 20 years ago and are starting to need repair or replacement. A new group of volunteers called the P3 Footpath Group has been formed under the leadership of Diane Shepherd with the task of maintaining the parish's footpath network. This group plans to undertake remedial work on signage as well as maintain the paths in usable condition. The group meets once a month, usually on a Wednesday, to undertake practical tasks and volunteers are always welcome.

Felsted Playing Field Project

Cllr Malcolm Radley reported that the Felsted Playing Field Project Group was wound up during 2018 and on 9 July 2018 the balance of the Group's funds, totalling £4426.57, was transferred to the Parish Council. These funds will be used for the provision of additional facilities in the playing field.

6. Felsted Neighbourhood Plan

Roy Ramm, Chairman of the NP Steering Group reported that the draft NP contains over 30 policies intended to secure the future of the Parish for the next 15 years. Uppermost in most resident's thoughts are naturally those relating to housing and amenities. The Group have drafted policies that fulfil the obligation to adhere to the National Planning Policy Framework and central/local government requirements, by delivering 63 new homes over the life of the Plan. However, the policies also deliver a new doctor's surgery (which will be owned by a charitable trust based in Felsted and will provide a revenue stream for the parish) and ease congestion at Watch House Green (by providing off-street parking for 90 vehicles and a safe pick-up and drop-off point for our Primary School).

A 'made' Plan offers the Parish significant protection from unwanted housing development but even at this stage our Plan forms the basis of objections to housing development applications including two current applications which have gone to appeal and which we have vigorously opposed.

We are very close to submitting our final Plan and an examining Inspector has been appointed but we are delayed from submitting the Plan because of a continuing issue with the SEA/HRA assessments which is not of our making. Roy Ramm went on to explain the issue in more detail and outline the ongoing efforts that are being made by the Group, our professional advisor and UDC to resolve the issue as quickly as possible.

The Chairman thanked Roy Ramm and all the members of the Felsted NP Steering Group for their hard work.

7. Nature Area

Cllr Graham Harvey reported that to date the following works had taken place at the Nature Area:

- The mature Willow trees have been felled and replaced with new Willow sets
- The grassed areas have been cut back to clear some of the nettles and thistles that had grown whilst the site was untended
- Security gates have been installed at the main entrance, staggered barriers erected across the pathway and a bund has been dug around the front of the site
- An ecological survey was undertaken to provide a greater understanding of the grassland, vegetation, hedgerows, trees and ponds. The survey concluded that the Nature Area has the potential to support various protected species such as bats, reptiles, amphibians and nesting birds.

This is the start of a long journey which will take many years to complete but we look forward to sowing wild flowers and seeding the newly landscaped area at the front of the site along with a planting scheme that will benefit not only the wildlife but also the residents of Felsted.

8. Open Forum

The following matters were covered:

- a) The Chairman read out a short report from District Councillors Marie Felton and Alan Mills which thanked the PC for all the hard work they put into making Felsted a wonderful place to live. They also acknowledged the enormous amount of work undertaken to produce the draft Felsted Neighbourhood Plan which is a credit to those involved. Both District Councillors would be standing down at the May election but they wished to record that it had been a pleasure to work with everyone and they hoped that the new District Councillors would be keen to continue the ongoing support to the parish and its community assets.
- b) Parish Council election on 2 May 2019 – The Chairman encouraged residents to think about joining the PC, especially younger members of the community. The Clerk had a supply of election Nomination Forms and the deadline for submission was 3 April 2019.
- c) Parish Litter Pick – The Clerk reminded everyone that the next Litter Pick was scheduled for Saturday 23 March.

The Chairman thanked the retiring Councillors, Nicholas Hinde and Stephanie Woodhouse for all their work and thanked everyone for their attendance.

The meeting closed at 7.37pm

Chairman

April 2020