

Wakes Colne Parish Council

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Clerks Report February 2009

Things Ongoing in February

February has been an interesting month as you will see from this report, all was going well until the last couple of days, I am sure the meeting will be an interesting one.

Action points from Cllr Chillingworth.

A letter was drafted and sent via e-mail to Cllr Turrell Re: Richard Parmee and the River Colne Countryside project. At the meeting Cllr Chillingworth advised that the Parish Council obtain copies of the Development Policies and Site Allocations Regulation 25 Consultation. This consultation finishes on the 27th February and Wakes Colne did not request any changes. If you would like to read the Site Allocations document Wakes Colne is mentioned on Pg 67 and Pg 89-90 in Appendix 3a. The Development Policies Document has no specific reference to Wakes Colne although it explains that this document forms part of the latest stage of the Local Development Framework (LDF) which will replace the outdated Local Plan system and in turn provide a strategy for the development of Colchester to 2021 and beyond. I have had a very brief look through and would recommend that we all read the documents at some point. The link to view electronically is http://www.colchester.gov.uk/Info_page_two_pic_2_det.asp?art_id=6161&sec_id=1604 Or go to www.colchester.gov.uk click on planning and the link is on the bottom right of the screen.

Rural Speed Restriction & the "Welcome to Wakes Colne" Sign at the top of Station Road:

Following the meeting it was agreed that I could now contact George Ward and progress things with the sign. Having chased him several times I have now had an update:

Are you going for the sign on one side only (on the station side) or both sides now?

Do you now have permission from the adjacent landowner/s to erect the sign/s which would extend onto their property?

Once this is clarified I will provide you with an estimate of costs so that you can let me have an order to supply and erect the sign/s.

I have replied confirming the agreed points from the meeting and suggested if he is happy with the sign design I am happy to contact Greene King to get permission to site the sign on their land. I may have an update before the meeting, however Greene King were very slow to respond last time.

Footpath 32 and the recent work completed

Following the meeting and the concerns that arose about Footpath 32 I was asked to find out what had happened previously. This item was on the Agenda in July of last year. For more information on what was agreed please see Clerks Report for July/August under Proposed Footpath Resurfacing / Footbridge Improvements.

Ditches, Drainage and Flooding in Wakes Colne- Malcolm Dade

Following the meeting it was agreed that I would contact Malcolm and arrange for him to come out and view the roads. Geoff Harris and the Highways team at Colchester Borough Council (CBC) are under extreme pressure at the moment as the state of the roads across the County are in a very bad state of disrepair. Following my bi-monthly Clerks Forum meeting it was established that Highways have little or no money left in the budget for repairs this financial year. Also the question was asked with the current economic climate how much money would be available in 2009 / 2010 for the roads? It was suggested that some of the more rural roads may not get repaired properly in the foreseeable future, the fact that the roads are only "patched up" now means that it is a constant ongoing programme I have contacted Malcolm and suggested that we are due a visit and we have scheduled a meeting for Tuesday 3rd March at 9.30am so I should have a plan and schedule for the meeting the next day

Precept for 2009 / 2010

I have had no notification that the precept has been accepted. The deadline date for the precept to be submitted to Colchester Borough Council was early February and to date I have not heard anything further.

Bank Accounts with a Higher Interest Rate

Interestingly the Colchester Association of Local Councils agreed at the January meeting to move their bank account from Lloyds TSB to Barclays. Since the last meeting Barclays have published the annual figures for the bank and it appears all is well for the near future. Within the last couple of days I have checked the internet to see what bank accounts are available to Parish Councils and it seems that we are not restricted to anyone one bank or building society. Rates vary from 0.1% interest to 3.5% depending on what we are looking for. Some accounts are instant access and some require 30 – 90 days notice. My thoughts would be we need to establish what type of account we are looking for before I do any research

VAT Reclaim

I submitted a VAT return to HM Customs & Excise at the end of last month and I have just received notification that it has been received. £243.10 was paid into the bank account on the 18th February.

Wakes Colne Parish Council Notice of the Annual Audit for the Year ending 31st March 2008

As agreed at the meeting following the accounts being signed off I sent the Annual Audit along with a letter to Mark Bartlett to complete last years accounts. While writing this report I have sent an e-mail to check that all is progressing well as yet I have not heard back so one would hope that it is all in hand.

Update 27th Feb: I have received an e-mail to advise that they have not yet received the handover file from the previous external auditors to be able to proceed with last years accounts. I have replied to ask if there is anything we can do to speed up the process.

Mr Dean Dwyer – Co-opted as a New Member

Following last months meeting it was agreed that I would contact Mr Dwyer and advise that his application had been successful and invite him to the next council meeting. I did this shortly after the meeting so Mr Dwyer had time within the month to get sorted. Following our correspondence via e-mail I then spoke to Cllr Dwyer and agreed to

collate all the information he would require to be a Councillor and e-mail and post the information. At present I have e-mailed some information and I have had to print some information as some of the e-mail were a little large I think. On behalf of the Council we are all looking forward to welcoming Mr Dwyer next Wednesday.

White Colne Community Design Group – Comments

I have been in touch with White Colne several times on this agenda item, as agreed I e-mailed and offered to advertise any forthcoming events.

NAP Information Event in Colchester

Following the meeting I e-mailed Cllr Glen-Martin to advise that the Council had agreed that someone should attend what was considered an important event. Cllr Glen-Martin has confirmed that she can attend. If anyone else would like to attend as well I can forward the information. Briefly, the event is on Thursday 19th March at the Moot Hall (in the Town Hall) Colchester and it starts at 9.30am and finishes around 2pm (I think lunch is included)

Installation of Level Entry Bus Stops – Update

Following the meeting I had a telephone call from Essex CC (Adrian Summons) to ask similar questions that Colchester Borough Council had asked previously. We established that on the 'Essex CC Map' there are no 'Official' bus stops between Wakes Colne (Viaduct) and White Colne. It was suggested by Essex CC (that not in this financial year but in the next) we could look at having an 'official' stop located near the Church if we would like. Briefly ECC and CBC now work in partnership with the bus companies to improve the highways, bus stops and shelters. It was suggested that near the Church just on one side of the road a bus flag may well be sited subject to all the relevant conditions. ECC advised me to call the bus company that operate route 88 and check that they are indeed happy to stop outside the Church. The bus company confirmed saying that if ECC and CBC wanted them to stop at a specific place then they would stop and work the fares accordingly. From speaking to First Bus they confirmed that if you wanted to get off at the Church they would charge the relevant fare to a stop either side of the Church depending on which way you were travelling. We are now waiting for Adrian Summons to contact me again to arrange a site visit – more updates will follow.

Annual Parish Meeting 2009 – Date and Format.

It was agreed at the February meeting that we would hold the Annual Parish Meeting on the 30th April at the Village Hall. It was also agreed that we would share this meeting with Chappel and that both councils would liaise. As both councils share most of the organisation it was thought that in the current economic climate this would be a very prudent move. Last year when the meetings were held separately most of the organisations either, attend both meetings or they attend one and not the other. From an expense point of view to the local community, having one meeting with one amount of expenditure will be more economical at the present time.

Parish Calendar and August 2009 meeting

Continuing on the expenditure theme, the Parish Calendar for August confirms that we currently **do not** have a meeting. From an expense point of view this does cut down a little on the stationery and printing costs, the rent and heating costs (although if we get a good summer we shouldn't need the heating on) and a little on the clerks costs. If anybody would like this to change i.e. now have a meeting in August please let me know and it can be put on the Agenda for next month (April).

Essex Police Report for Chappel & Wakes Colne area

This report was sent through to me early in February by Essex Police:

We have had a few residents report that vehicles are being driven dangerously under the viaduct in Chappel and speeding through the village so please drive cautiously. Police patrol the area at random times and anyone found to be driving inappropriately will be positively dealt with and ultimately could have their vehicle seized.

In the Great Tey area vehicles have been broken into and had items stolen from them. Please contact us if you see people acting suspiciously around vehicles.

The next rural Neighbourhood Action Panel (NAP) is on Thursday, March 12, 2009, at Mount Bures Village Hall starting at 6.45pm.

Also I have had an e-mail from Vicky Sanders our Neighbourhood Specialist Officer, who has asked if we would like her to attend our meetings on a regular basis. Maybe this is something we could put on the agenda in the future.

Chappel & Wakes Colne Emergency Plan – Update

It was agreed at the last meeting that Cllr Sue Chamley from Chappel PC and Cllr Sue Stratford from Wakes Colne PC would use the template that CBC had sent through to update our current emergency plan.

Vernons Road and the Caravans

This is a new agenda item which has only just arisen, however it has moved at a very fast pace this week. I will give you a brief overview of the facts, however it will be discussed at length at the meeting:

A plot of land on Vernons Road appears to have been divided up into 8 separate plots of land and new fencing has started to be erected. Chris Cordingley contacted Cheryl Headford (Planning Investigation Office at CBC) on the 20th February to inform them of the situation and ask for something to be done about it. CBC advised that at that time no breach of planning had occurred, but they would look into the matter. On the 23rd February CBC advised the following:

Just a quick email to advise that we have today been on site to try and establish what the intentions are with this piece of land.

We have been told that the site is in the ownership of 5 people, all claim to be genuine travellers and are apparently all related and have local connections with family members in both Braintree and Tiptree. Their intention is to submit an application for caravans and a day room/washing facilities using a local agent.

I will be having a meeting with the Planning Services Manager, Vince Pearce, tomorrow morning to see if there is anything to be gained in serving a Temporary Stop Notice, however this would only prevent additional caravans coming on site for a period of 28 days.

I suspect that we may have to allow them to make the application and go through the planning process and if this is the case I am not in a position to be able to say whether or not they are likely to be successful. Obviously once a planning officer has seen the site he would be best placed to answer this.

They stated that they would be using a Planning Agent and we asked for the application to be made as quickly as possible. I will be following up with a letter tomorrow allowing 28 days for submission. However, if they do use an agent this may not be a feasible amount of time and an extension may be necessary.

Our Traveller and Gypsy Liaison Officer will be informed and visiting shortly and I have also informed the other relevant Council Departments, including the Revenues Office for the council tax.

On the 24th February an e-mail was sent to CBC asking what steps CBC were taking to halt the development of the land and CBC sent another e-mail to advise of the following:

I have had a meeting this morning with both my manager, Alistair Day and Vincent Pearce, Planning Services Manager, to decide on the appropriate cause of action to take in this matter. We have been advised that there are 5 families who own the field, all related to each other, who wish to establish a settled community. At least 2 of these families have relations living on approved sites in the Borough, or very nearby who are known to us.

The Council is of the opinion that an application would likely be considered favourably, as the site appears to meet the criteria laid down by Government for gypsy and travellers sites. Therefore at this stage we will not be taking enforcement action, but will be inviting them to submit an application for the change the use of the land to the residential siting of their caravans, with possibly a day room/toilet block. We will be requesting submission of the application within a given timescale, if this is not forthcoming then we will have to reconsider what course of action is appropriate.

You will be notified when the application is received and have the opportunity to voice your concerns and it is likely that this matter will be referred before the Planning Committee for their consideration.

I realise that you, and other nearby residents, will be unhappy with this situation however I regret that at this stage no formal enforcement action will be taken.

I have discussed this matter at length with Cllr Chillingworth and whilst he has the local residents welfare as his prime concern, I am sure that he appreciates the situation has to proceed in this manner.

If you wish I am happy to discuss this matter further with you, as is Mr Pearce (Mr Day will be unavailable as he should be undergoing an operation tomorrow)

It seems that as far as the CBC are concerned at the moment it is a done deal. As I mentioned earlier, this is on the Agenda for discussion this is just FYI. Cllr Chillingworth is aware of the situation and he may bring an update to the meeting on Wednesday.

Winter Gritting Programme FYI

I am not sure if any of you will remember but last year whilst attending a Clerks Forum meeting I had a presentation on the Gritting of the counties roads. Following that presentation I must have been added to the distribution list and so received the following information:

Essex County Council has taken the operational decision to revise its gritting programme in light of the present national shortage of gritting salt and forecasts predicting prolonged winter conditions.

All 'A' roads, some 'B' roads and other additional roads serving larger towns and villages will be treated as well as access roads to major hospitals, fire and ambulance stations. At the present time the county has sufficient supplies of salt to ensure that all major routes remain sufficiently gritted for at least the next seven days and Essex County Council and its contractors continue to monitor the situation closely.

Several centimetres of snow is predicted to fall over the next 24 hours in parts of Essex with below freezing night time temperatures continuing for the foreseeable future putting continued pressure on the council's winter gritting service.

Essex County Council has approximately 2000 tonnes of rock and white salt in stock at the current time and continues to receive limited deliveries of both. Each gritting round uses approximately 150 tonnes of salt, depending on the severity of the conditions and 1-2 gritting rounds are carried out each day.

Secondary routes including pavements and minor roads will not be automatically treated, as has sometimes been the case during lighter spells of wintry weather, but will be treated as soon as the supplies of winter gritting salt are sufficient.

Drivers are being urged to drive with extreme caution in the continuing icy conditions and to make provisions in case of a delay. Pedestrians are advised to take extreme care as pavements and footpaths will not be treated although they will be treated as soon as possible.

Essex County Council's website will continue to display up to date information on the situation at www.essex.gov.uk and members of the public who require emergency assistance are advised to call Contact Essex on 0845 603 7631.

Councillor Norman Hume, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation and Chairman of the Essex Casualty Reduction Board, said: "The prolonged weather situation facing our county combined with a national shortage of gritting salt means that we need to focus our attention on keeping as many of our residents moving as possible.

"I appreciate there will be concerns that a number of routes in Essex will not be winter treated until the situation improves but in common with much of the UK we need to prioritise our service.

"I would like to ask the public to take especial care on untreated roads as we continue to do our utmost to keep Essex moving to the best of our ability".

This information was sent through whilst experiencing the arctic conditions earlier in February and I thought it would help you if any parishioners complain about the lack of

gritting on the counties roads. A copy of the full document will be in the correspondence file.

Clerks Forum Meeting 26th February 2009

Finally, as you all must be fed up with reading now, I will update you all at the meeting on the presentations I received at the Clerks Forum. The first presentation was delivered by the Open Road Charity and CBC and it was about the Colchester SOS and Community Bus. The second presentation was entitled **Welfare Advice Market – ‘Surviving the Crunch’** and this was all about events taking place in the borough next week in conjunction with other organisations to help people cope with the current economic climate.