

Wakes Colne Parish Council

www.wakescolne.org

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Clerks Report March 2009

Things Ongoing in March

February was an interesting month but March has been even more interesting and a little more 'out of the ordinary' I think. Normally I write my report at the end of the month so I have all the updates, this month I have been working on it as we have gone along so not to miss any important information.

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

I have been in touch several times this month with George Ward from Highways re: the sign at the top of the Station Road. It was agreed at the last meeting that we were happy with the sign and I was asked to contact George Ward to get things moving. Following the meeting and getting confirmation from George Ward I have sent the sign design and a map of where the sign would be situated to Greene King. Since then I have been advised that Greene King would like to see a photo of the place the sign is to be situated. I have now taken the photos and I have e-mailed them back to Greene King and I am now waiting to hear from them. I may have an update before the meeting

Ditches, Drainage and Flooding in Wakes Colne- Malcolm Dade

Following the meeting I have been in touch with Malcolm re: the flooding. We confirmed all the area's that needed attention and Malcolm was going to deal with it and report back. As far as I know he has been out on our roads this month doing the minor repairs. The A1124 has been re-surfaced near Tatems, this part of the A1124 was particularly bad and in need of urgent attention. If anybody has anymore issues with regards the roads and the state of repair just e-mail and I will forward it on to Malcolm. Under this agenda item it was agreed that I write to Nicholas Percival and request that he clears his ditches out. This was done and I have copied his response and it will be available for you all at the meeting. Very briefly he says that the comments are non-specific and that they regularly clear debris and rubbish from the ditches. He would like us to be more specific as to where the problem areas are. I will cover this item under Clerks Report Update as the letter arrived in the post after the agenda had been put up.

Bank Accounts with a Higher Interest Rate

Unfortunately this item has not received much attention this month due to other more pressing business, however I may be able to do some research before the meeting if not I will put it on the Agenda for May and do some research in April.

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

This is an agenda item which will require the Chairperson to sign the amendments. We have had a letter back from the Audit Commission asking for further information on the % variances from 2006 /2007 to 2007 / 2008. We had already sent an explanation for the variances but the Audit

Commission wanted the figures to back it up. Mark Fogg-Elliott has completed the work and when it has been signed off by the Chairperson we will be able to return it. We have 28 days to complete the work from the date of the letter.

Annual Parish Meeting 2009 – Date and Format.

This meeting will take place on the 30th April in Wakes Colne Village Hall at 7.30pm and is a joint meeting with Chappel. We have invited all the usual organisations and the letters went out on the 28th March as yet we haven't had any replies but I will keep you all posted. The following organisations have been invited:

EARM

School

Cricket Club

Football Club

The Church

Football Club

British Legion

1st Response Unit

The Swan Pub

Women's Institute

The Stay & Play Group

Village Hall Committee

Vicky Sanders PCSO Police

Millennium Green Trust

Bowls Club

Sunday School

Village Reporter

Chappel Parish Council

If you have any more thoughts of who to invite please let me know.

Chappel & Wakes Colne Emergency Plan – Update

I have received the updated information but as yet have not processed it and sent it back to Colchester Borough Council. I will be working on this in April.

Appeal by Mrs O'Brien – Site at Wakes Colne Lodge, Lower Green

The appeal was dismissed in the interests of highway safety. The appeal decision will be in the Agenda folder for you to have a look at if you so wish.

BT's Review of Pay Phone Provision within the Borough.

Following a period of consultation in 2008 the Parish Council were asked for comments on the two phone boxes in Wakes Colne. We decided that the phone box on the main road (A1124) should be retained but the box at Lower Green could be removed. Our comments/reasons were agreed with but as yet we have no time frame for the removal of the box.

Vernons Road and the Caravans

This has been an ongoing issue this month with a lot of correspondence going backward and forward. Following our meeting on the 4th March I had the press ring several times looking for a story, I have also had lots of parishioners on the phone enquiring about the situation, some that have left contact details and some that haven't, generally the strength of feeling is one of discontent. Below I have copied correspondence that I have received in the last month.

Having not heard anything following Chappels meeting on the 11th March I thought I ought to get an update from somewhere. As Chappel Parish Council were not forthcoming with information. I e-mailed Peter Chillingworth for an update and the response was as follows:

Hi Valerie

I assume you mean the travellers site and not the highway/signage problem I identified. Regarding the latter, I am meeting an officer tomorrow on site and will report at the next PC. Travellers were the main topic at Chappel PC last week when some of your Councillors were present. The planning application has not yet been submitted, but the 28 days is not yet up. Having discussed with the planning manager, he wants to meet reps from the two PCs after the deadline to discuss either the planning application or the action the Council propose, if none has been submitted. This, rather than another public meeting at this stage. Chappel PC will then consult with you on the way forward.

A further update was received from Cllr Chillingworth and this was as follows:

Morning Valerie

Sorry for rather brief response before, I have been a little unwell. The 28 days started from the meeting between the travellers and the enforcement officer so believe it expires next week. It may therefore appear on the Website either on Monday week or the following week. Following the 'horse incident' the travellers told me they now have an agent. Regarding the meeting with the Planning Service Manager, I will await his call to the Parish Councils for the meeting and where it will be held; I assume probably in his office. I understand from Sue Stratford, your people are unhappy with his proposal. Yes, I did suggest a public meeting with him present, but he from experience feels a smaller meeting with the PC reps to explain in detail the position and consultation options would be more productive and helpful. If after this briefing the two PCs wish to hold a further public meeting they can, however as everyone who wished has already expressed their views at the PC meeting it may not be necessary, but that will be up to both Councils. Do not forget, officers know very well the public concern. What they need in respect of the application consultation is well presented, reasoned objections/comments on behalf of the parishes, which the councils with back up from their interested residents can provide. OK, when I referred to the 'public meeting' I was of course meaning your PC meeting when the public were able to express their views, as they did at Chappel PC, sorry. By the time your next meeting comes round we should have a better idea of the situation, but in the meantime, it would be useful to decide who is to attend the meeting with Vincent Pearce (the Planning Service Manager) so that they can prepare their questions.

Both these responses were in line with what Keith and Hilda had advised as they had attended the meeting. As you can see this was a big turn round from the information that was received at our meeting on the 4th March. Following on from all the e-mails and not really getting the required answers I was looking for, I rang Cheryl Headford (Enforcement Officer CBC) on Monday 23rd March to ask when the 28 days expired and I was told it had been extended until the 20th April. The following day I received a letter from Vincent Pearce that read as follows:

Dear Ms Burrows

Land on West side of Vernons Road, Chappel, Colchester

Further to previous correspondence I am writing to update you of the current situation regarding the gypsy site at Vernons Road.

As you are aware the Council has decided against taking any immediate direct enforcement action and has invited the occupiers to submit a planning application to regularise the use. In the event that a valid application is lodged within the revised timescale now set by the Council, as described below, it is considered inappropriate to explore options for action in advance of such an application being determined.

An Agent has now been instructed and an informal meeting has taken place with the Planning Officer to discuss the Council's position, so that all relevant matters can be covered in the application.

There is a great deal of work which will have to go into a gypsy site application and we have agreed a deadline for submission of 20 April 2009. However, it would be reasonable to agree to a small extension of time, if requested by the agent, rather than have an incomplete application lodged which we cannot determine.

I wish to advise you that the Investigation Officer, Cheryl Headford, will be withdrawing from any involvement in this case, due to the fact that the agent, recently instructed by the gypsies, is known to her. So for the time being I would ask that you direct any queries that you may have to me until such time as the planning officer has been formally assigned to handle the expected planning application.

Yours sincerely

Vincent Pearce

Vincent Pearce

Planning Services Manager

During the month I spoken several times with Joanne Dolman and Alison Bishop (who are part of the local resident forum) on the situation and they have given me some very useful information. As I understand it at the current time the 'Local Residents Forum' have employed a solicitor to work on their behalf and they will keep us informed as to what is happening. They are due to have a meeting on Monday so would expect an update before our meeting on Wednesday. During the month I heard about a similar situation in Crockleford Heath / Ardleigh – I am unsure if they (travellers) owned the land but following a great deal of concern the outcome was a refusal. I have read the minutes from some of the meetings and the Parish Council were very active in the approach. I have attached a link to read some of the press reports

http://www.essexcountystandard.co.uk/search/4085838.Crockleford_Heath_Controversial_travellers_plans_rejected/

<p>Ardleigh Parish Council 08/01317/FUL Refusal - Full 18.02.2009 Committee Decision</p>	<p><i>Mr William Banks</i></p>	<p><i>Change of use to Gypsy traveller site for 12 permanent residential pitches to include ancillary facilities such as access road, fencing, amenity buildings, mobile homes and associated ancillary works.</i></p>	<p><i>Esther-Lee Stable Green Lane Crockleford Heath Essex</i></p>
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Whilst there is an acknowledged need for pitches in the District, there is no evidence or history to suggest that this need is within the Parish of Ardleigh. The acknowledged need for gypsy and traveller pitches in the District is outweighed by the fact that (a) the proposed development of the site would have more than a minimal adverse visual impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding rural area, in that it would, by virtue of its scale and layout dominate its countryside setting, which would seriously erode the spacious, open character and visual appearance of the locality, to the detriment of local amenity, contrary to criterion (v) of policy HG22 and criterion (i) of policy QL11 of the Tendring District Local Plan 2007 (adopted on 11 December 2007); (b) the proposed development would harm the residential amenity of nearby dwellings by reason of noise, disturbance and traffic movements, contrary to criterion (vi) of the said policy HG22 and criterion (ii) of policy QL11; (c) the proposed development, by virtue of its isolated location, would not be reasonably accessible to local services, including heath facilities and schools and by public transport, and

Another area troubled with travellers at the moment is Elmstead Market, I have read the minutes from some of the meetings and they are not so lucky I have copied a web link to the Essex County Standard so you can view the newspaper articles if you wish.

<http://www.essexcountystandard.co.uk/search/?search=Travellers+in+Elmstead+Market>

This is a website link to Essex County Council with regards to travellers for some more information
<http://www.essexcc.gov.uk/vip8/ecc/ECCWebsite/dis/gui.jsp?channelOid=17089&guideOid=15237>

And finally I have included a definition of a traveller/gypsy from a document on the communities' government website and this is as follows:

Persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin, including such persons who on grounds only of their own or their family's or dependants' educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently, but excluding members of an organised group of travelling show people or circus people traveling together as such.

This is the link to document and it is called PLANNING FOR GYPSY AND TRAVELLER CARAVAN SITES

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/circulargypsytraveler.pdf>

Clerks Training

NAP Information Event in Colchester

Law Procedure Course at Dunmow

Clerks Training Day in South Woodham Ferrers

These will all be covered in the training report delivered on the night of the meeting