

Chairman's Report 2017

Introduction

Firstly, may I welcome everyone to this, the Lawford Parish Assembly, which has taken on a somewhat different look for 2017. We hope that you have had an opportunity to have a look around some of the clubs and societies stalls, and equally I hope that those running these stalls have had an opportunity to advertise themselves to the people of our parish. When initially talking about the new format for this Assembly, it was not known what the response would be, and in order to allow us to make any necessary changes for future years, could I please ask that you give any feedback to the councillors at some point during the evening, either verbally or using the feedback forms.

Chairman's Report

It would be very difficult to go through every action that the council have undertaken over the last 12 months, so this report will be used to highlight some of the main actions, whether completed or ongoing. If you wish to know more details about the work undertaken by the council, I would warmly invite you to either our main meetings, which are held on the third Monday of every month, or if you are interested in the more specific work undertaken by the various committees, these are usually held on the first Monday of each month, on a 2-monthly rolling cycle. Full details are available on the council's website and notice boards, as are minutes of previous meetings.

There have been a number of personnel changes on the council over the last 12 months. Firstly, I would like to thank Jenine Collier, who recently resigned for personal reasons, for all her contributions to the council over a number of years, the most noteworthy of which was working with myself and a few other individuals to plan three very successful local community events, the most recent of which will be discussed later.

Following the passing of another councillor, Peter Peacock, and when then including two previous vacancies, we have successfully co-opted four new councillors, Maggie Woods and Iain Miles, and then very recently Steven Adcock-Jones and Dean Smith (although Dean hasn't yet officially accepted office). I know that all four of these individuals are going to be a great asset to

the council going forward, and I again welcome them to Lawford Parish Council.

Finally for the personnel aspect of the council, I feel it appropriate to mention at this point the recent passing of a previous councillor, Geoff Rayner, who I am led to believe was a very active councillor for a number of years, and Brian Clarkson who was previously the Parish Clerk and who then became the council's auditor for a number of years. Our thoughts and condolences go to both their families.

At this point I would like to extend thanks to our Parish Handyman, Dave Childs, who has worked tirelessly to ensure Lawford is a tidy and well maintained area. He has proved very flexible in undertaking necessary work in the community and is now becoming a well-known face in the village. I would also like to thank Pat Peachey, the Parish Clerk, for her conscientious and hard-working approach to her role, which ensures that the council works within its remit and ensures the public are consistently kept up to date with actions being taken.

Whilst I wish to thank all councillors for their efforts over the last year, which I would like to remind you they do voluntarily and often give up a lot of their time, I would particularly like to mention Andy, Carlo and Val for their county and district reports. We are very lucky to have these three individuals as part of our parish council and we value their regular updates from beyond the village. At this point I must also single out Julie Langstone, who has not only undertaken the chairmanship of the Personnel and Highways committees, but who has also been the main organiser of this evening's event, so my thanks go to her for all her hard work.

Whilst mentioning the Highways committee, which can at times be a somewhat frustrating area of the council's work, I would like to highlight one of the most noticeable aspects of their work in the community over the last 12 months, namely the introduction of the Vehicle Activated Speed camera, which has been located in a variety of different areas. We truly hope that this has made our local roads safer by reminding motorists of their speed and hopefully making them slow down.

The Highways committee have also spent a lot of time reviewing the problems of parking on the local roads, particularly those related to users of Manningtree Station, and the double yellow lines have now been introduced

to Station Road to try to resolve some of these problems. Following a public consultation, further restrictions have now been put forward for those affected by the parking issue being moved into their streets, namely the Queensway estate, and this is an ongoing action at this time.

Finally in regard to Highways, you will recently have heard that, unfortunately, the provision of Traffic Lights under the station underpass has been put back because of urgent safety work, which is now underway, but we hope that the lights will still be put in place later this year.

Moving on to the financial affairs of the council, we have continued to support local groups and charities through grant payments, and these have included the Essex Air Ambulance, First Responders, Lawford Guides, St Mary the Virgin Lawford Church (for the maintenance of the churchyard), Manningtree and District Community Bus, Royal British Legion, Acorn Village Christmas market, Ogilvie Hall, and the Friendly Club. Anyone interested in applying for a grant can do so via the parish clerk.

The council currently has a healthy balance in its accounts, however, much of this is earmarked for upcoming projects. These amount to a total of around £85,000 and include a supplementary play scheme at Summers Park, potential improvements to local footpaths, upgrading and relocation of play equipment at School Lane, as well as the final section of the resurfacing of the car park, and the payment for the purchase of Riverview play area and the footpath linking it to Summer Park, which as you may have read in the press recently, we have finally been able to agree to purchase from Tendring District Council, after somewhat lengthy negotiations. The parish council will be paying £33,000 plus legal costs for the land, and despite recent rumours to the contrary, we will be maintaining this area into the future as a play area for the benefit of the local community.

Whilst mentioning Summers Park, I am pleased to be able to confirm that the Parish Council are continuing to work closely with Rose builders as this development, and the plans for the land off Bromley Road, continue to develop. The Multi-Use Games Area at the High School was officially opened on 20th September and this is now being very well used both by the school itself and by other clubs outside school hours. A reminder that the MUGA can be hired by any members of the public via the school website.

The council took ownership of the open space beside Summers Park in January, although this will be maintained by Rose builders for the next two years. The area is currently fenced off whilst the grass and trees get established, but the footpath linking the new homes to Lawford Dale is due to be opened later this month - this will allow direct access for pedestrians and cyclists from Leftleys estate through Lawford Dale to the station, which we believe will be of great local benefit. It is then anticipated that the eight houses to be gifted to the Lawford Housing Enterprise Trust, at a monetary benefit of £1.8 million, will be started in September, with an expected completion date of April or May next year. A national press release is expected to be made at the first turf cutting for these Trust houses, as it is still believed to be the first of its kind in the country.

Finally with regard to the Summers Park development, it should be noted that once it has reached the halfway mark, the Council will be actively pursuing the continuation of speed limit reductions for the remaining stretch of Cox's Hill down to the roundabout.

In addition to the developments mentioned above, there are also a number of other plans for housing developments in the local area, and where invited to do so, we continue to work with developers to ensure sufficient benefits for the local area. A recent planning application has been approved for 8 houses off Bromley Road / Grange Road, which will benefit the council to a value of £195,000, and plans are in place to look at making changes to the play equipment at School Lane recreation ground, including the potential improvement of the tennis courts into a more updated Multi-Use Games Area. Further details of these will be available as the plans develop.

Whilst discussing School Lane, there has been further progress made on the re-surfacing of the car park and only small amount of the car park now needs to be surfaced. Thanks go to the former clerk to the council, Dave Thurlow, who has continued his work to get this project completed, and he is currently in the process of finding further grants to add to the council's allocated funds to finalise it.

Finally, we should make note of the two awards received by the council for its maintenance of both School Lane and Riverview play areas, which have been gratefully received.

Finally, I cannot end my report without mentioning the Family Fun at the Furze event which was held on 26th June last year. I would like to thank the few individuals who helped to make this such a successful event, both within this council and our immediate neighbours in Mistley and Manningtree, and to all those local people who attended, which made the time and effort put into it worthwhile. We are already talking about plans for a further event in 2018, so watch out for further details.

All in all therefore, it has been a busy year for the council, and with a number of positive projects being undertaken, I hope you have been able to gain an understanding of the work carried out by your councillors over the last 12 months. We hope that we are continuing to help make Lawford a safe and desirable place to reside, and again my personal thanks to all councillors for their help and support across the last year.

This concludes my formal Chairman's report, and as mentioned earlier, a number of councillors are available throughout the evening if you wish to ask questions or would like to give feedback on this evening's event. For now however, I would like to open the floor for any questions you may have, which you feel are relevant for all to hear....

Many thanks for your time, we hope you have found the formal part of the evening of interest, and I now invite you to circulate the tables and to talk to councillors.