

## **Parish Assembly – Chairman’s Report**

Firstly, may I welcome one and all to the Lawford Parish Council Parish Meeting and thank you for attending. This part of the evening is the more formal part, consisting of three updates: one from the County Council, one from the District Council and then one from myself as Chairman of the Parish Council. We hope that you will then take the opportunity to have a further look round the many clubs and societies’ stalls and to talk to the parish councillors who will be circulating the hall.

Having trialled this new format for the meeting last year, we have moved to a new venue this year, which has hopefully given a little more room for circulating. Can I take this opportunity to thank Councillor Julie Langstone, for all her hard work in organising and preparing this evening, and we have a token of thanks for her... (Flowers were presented).

In order to help shape future Parish Meetings, could we please ask that you complete a feedback form at some point during the evening and give us your honest opinion on what works well and if you see anything that you feel we could improve.

(Accept apologies and agree previous minutes)

All that said, we now move on to our first report which is from our County Councillor, Carlo Guglielmi, who unfortunately couldn’t be with us this evening. I shall therefore read the report on his behalf...

And now we move onto the District Council report from Andy Baker....

And finally, I now give my Chairman’s report, which is a brief resume of the work undertaken or being undertaken by the council. Before I begin may I remind everyone that all information, including agendas and minutes of previous meetings, can be found on the council’s website and shortly, on the new Facebook page. May I also remind everyone that council’s main meetings are held on the third Monday of every month and that all parishioners are warmly invited to attend.

Amenities

It has again been a very busy year for the amenities committee, with a range of work being undertaken. We are continuing to purchase Riverview from Tendring District Council in order to maintain it as an open space recreation area, although this has taken a lot longer than we had anticipated, but it is hoped that this purchase will be finalised within the very near future. Once purchased, council is looking to spend some of its reserves on completing the footpaths joining the new Summers Park development to other footpaths at the back of Lawford Dale, and also to improve the standing area outside the back gate to Highfields Primary School.

With regard to School Lane Recreation Ground I am pleased to be able to confirm that the final part of the car park has now been surfaced and this now brings to an end the many years of work on the pavilion and car park project. I must take this opportunity to say a huge thank you to Dave Thurlow, who not only undertook a lot of work to make this happen when he was parish clerk, but who has continued to do so since his retirement. I am pleased to be able to confirm that the final car park surfacing was able to be completed with very little cost to the council itself, thanks to Dave having secured a number of grants towards the work. The council now has further development plans for School Lane, particularly linked to the tennis courts and children's play areas, and hopefully further details of these will be available in the near future.

## Highways

It has been another busy and frustrating year for the Highways committee, with many ongoing situations still not having been solved at this time. These include a number of parking issues, particularly related to the station and surrounding the schools on Colchester Road and Long Road. We are continuing to look into solutions for these, with a number of resolutions in the pipeline, but as these involve a number of third parties this is not always a quick turnaround.

It would also appear that further progress is finally being made on the situation at the underpass, and whilst we appreciate this is going to take some considerable time, we are pleased to see that actions are being taken, and we now await further information as this project develops.

Despite some ongoing issues with the Vehicle Activated Sign, this is now proving to be a good reminder to motorists of the expected speeds on our local roads, and we will continue to move this sign across a variety of locations and analyse the data that it is producing, in order to make our roads safer.

Finally, can we please ask that all parishioners continue to report anything they see with regard to highways defects, either to the parish clerk or directly to Essex County Council through their website.

## Finance

As well as paying to maintain all the local amenities, council has been pleased to have been able to make a number of grants to good causes during the last 12 months, and these have included a contribution towards a local Guider's educational trip to India, Acorn Village's Christmas Fayre, The Friendly Club, Autumn Days, the Royal British Legion, funds towards maintaining the churchyard and a donation of £1000 to the Essex Air Ambulance. May I please remind everyone that if they feel they could benefit from a grant from the council, that they can apply through the finance committee, via the parish clerk.

The council reserves are looking healthy at the moment, but with a number of projects in the pipeline, particularly those linked to Riverview and School Lane, it is anticipated that these will be spent shortly.

## Crime Report

Council continues to review crime reports on a monthly basis and at times have been concerned with the increased number of these, and particularly the fact that the vast majority have been unsolved. Council is continuing to work with the police to try to gain a higher level of presence in the area, and although the idea of PCSOs has been discussed and rejected, the possibility of funding Special Constables is currently being mooted, although changes within Essex Police has meant that meetings due to take place have been postponed at this time. However, you may have seen the reports last week that the police will now have an office in the fire station, so we will now wait to see the impact of this move, which was originally suggested to the police and rejected some 8 years ago.

## Planning

The planning committee have reviewed quite an increase in planning applications this year, and have worked effectively to make appropriate comments to Tendring District Council. Of course, some of these have caused controversy in the area, and we would encourage members of the public to

ensure that they make appropriate comments directly and individually to Tendring District Council, as Lawford Parish Council is merely one voice. Where planning applications are made and expected to be given consent, this council will always endeavour to communicate with the developers to ensure appropriate benefits are forthcoming for the local area, although recent history has shown us that developers are not always willing to have this communication, possibly due to the fact that we, as with all town and parish councils, are not a statutory consultee.

## Personnel

It is at this point that I must make a number of ‘thank you’s’ to all those that have helped the council over the last year.

Firstly, this goes to all the volunteer councillors who give up their spare time to maintain and improve the parish of Lawford. Unfortunately, there are, at times, a number of parishioners who de-value or challenge the ethics and/or motivation of the work completed by these individuals, and who feel that decisions are made without due consideration. Apart from reassuring members of the public that this is absolutely not the case, I wish to thank all councillors for continuing to serve during these times of adversity.

As outlined later, there will shortly be two positions being advertised on this council, and I therefore truly hope that those who feel aggrieved, or who hide behind social media to make their negative and potentially defamatory comments, put themselves forward for these positions in order to have their say and to help shape the future of Lawford going forward.

I must at this point, particularly thank our County Councillor, Carlo, and our District Councillors, Val and Andy, not only for their work within the parish, but on their wider activities, all of which they regularly keep us updated on. I would also like to extend my thanks to Julie Langstone, particularly in regard to her work as Chair of Personnel. She has worked hard to complete all HR requirements for employing our clerk, which has extended to organising wages and Inland Revenue documentation, the latter two of which will now be outsourced in the future.

I would also like to thank our Parish Handyman, Dave Childs, who regularly checks all our assets and play areas, keeps our footpaths and other open areas clear of foliage and rubbish, and who moves and downloads data from the Vehicle Activated Sign, as well as a range of other duties. Dave is always reliable and quick to respond to any additional needs that the council may have,

and again I would ask that parishioners notify the parish clerk if they see anything untoward, and Dave can then be notified.

Finally, I must thank our parish clerk, Pat Peachey, for all the work she undertakes on behalf of the council, ensuring that all our requirements are met appropriately. These tasks include creating agendas and minutes for all council meetings, as well as creating and updating policies and procedures, maintaining finances etc, all of which she completes with a high level of diligence.

There is of course one thank you that I have not mentioned yet, and that is to a gentleman who has been a parish councillor in Lawford for more than thirty years, twenty-five of which were as Chairman. Brian Rolfe MBE has very recently resigned from the council, due to ill health and unfortunately, has not been able to make it this evening due to this. I therefore visited Brian over the weekend and he talked me through his highs and lows of the last thirty years, from when he joined the council due to the sale of 4 tennis courts, and was immediately made Chairman, through to the completion of the Football Club pavilion, which he drove through from start to finish, amongst many other projects. I also made a presentation to Brian on behalf of all councillors and parishioners, past and present. This included some vouchers for him to spend on something special for his garden from Hearts Delight, as well as this certificate, which bestows upon him the title of 'Honorary Freeman of the Parish of Lawford'. Despite his not being here, can I please ask that we thank Brian for his 30 years of faithful service by way of a round of applause.

## LHET

As you may have seen in the press recently, it is with great pride that I am able to confirm that the Lawford Housing Enterprise Trust is now accepting applications for potential tenants for the eight two-bedroom properties on Summers Park donated to it by Rose Builders, a capital benefit of £1.8million. These properties are available to anyone aged 18-40 with a Lawford connection, and are offered with a maximum tenancy of 5 years at a cost of £500 per month – far below local council and private rental rates. In addition, £100 of this rental rate each month will be set aside to then be returned to the tenant at the end of their tenancy, the idea of which is to allow them to pay towards a deposit on a new property at that time. Full details are available at the Trust's website: [lhet.org](http://lhet.org) or if you require further details this evening, please feel free to talk to me.

FFF

Continuing the exciting news, I am pleased to be able to confirm that this council, along with Mistley and Manningtree, will once again be contributing towards the biennial event 'Family Fun at the Furze'. This will take place on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2018 between 12noon and 6pm at Furze Hills, Mistley. The day will include a large range of children's entertainment, including 16 different inflatable-based activities (at a cost of £5 for a wristband lasting the whole six hours), as well as sports coaching provided by local clubs. There will be a range of live music, including that of the local band 'Keystone', the 1940s music group 'Fox, Wiggle and Sass' and 'Jade Mayjean' who has previously appeared on 'The Voice'. There will also be demonstrations from local dance and cheerleading groups, a boot fair, charity stalls, and a range of food outlets and a bar. Transport will be provided by way of a continuous round-robin bus service, with various pick ups around Lawford and Manningtree, in order to avoid traffic issues near the venue. If you require any further details of this event, or feel that you would like to be involved in some way, please talk to me this evening.

## Resignation

And finally, having said all the above, it is with a degree of sadness that I must now, after 10 years of service, tender my resignation, both as Chairman and councillor of Lawford Parish Council. This is due to my having now moved away from the parish, and my wish to concentrate further on my career.

It has certainly been an 'interesting' 10 years with a large number of highs, as well as some lows. The highs have included the elements which have made Lawford a better place for those living here, such as the development of the play areas, the various jubilee and other family-based events which I have helped organise (and which I will continue to do). The lows... I'm not even going to mention! It only remains for me to personally thank all those people I have worked with in relation to my council work, be it councillors past and present, employees, the press, and those members of the public who have taken time to be involved in caring for their local area. As mentioned earlier, I hope that the vacancies that have arisen through both my and Brian's resignations, will now be filled with positive and enthusiastic individuals who now have the opportunity to make a difference.

Thank you for listening. I now invite questions of a nature that you feel are of benefit for all attendees to hear. If you have any other specific or more

individual questions, please do take the opportunity to ask these of councillors or myself during the rest of the evening, and please remember to complete the feedback forms!

Any questions?.....