

# **Minutes of Great Oakley Parish Council Annual Assembly** **Held at the Village Hall 7.00pm Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2015**

**Present:** Mr S Huk – Chairman, Mr T Spurge – Vice Chairman, Mr B Eaton, Mr J Tierney, Miss N Booth, Mr C Mayman, County Cllr A Erskine

**Apologies for Absence:** Mr N Daniels, Mrs J Mason, Mr M Bransby

There were two members of the public present.

Annual Assembly was opened by Chairman at 7.00pm.

**Chairman's Report:** Chairman started off by saying that 2015 will be a national and local government election year.

Our local PCSO Ray Aylott retired this year and will be missed by all for his service to our community. As a consequence of Ray's retirement and the wider cuts in Police funding, we will no longer be receiving monthly reports on crime in our area. As an alternative, we have been referred to the monthly Neighbourhood Watch Newsletter available on-line with links available on our Website.

We are saddened to note the passing of a previous Parish Council Chairman, Brian Lawrence.

Having held the level of the Precept last year, to ensure we are able to continue to meet our commitments and maintain the levels of service to our community, we have had to increase it for the next year by 2.06% to £18,600.

The two new bus shelters on Beaumont Road near Red Barn Lane have been installed and our thanks go to Cllr Erskine for raising this with Essex County Council.

We have replaced the two street lights by the war memorial as they were failing repeatedly and were beyond economic repair.

The Village Sign was brought down by winter storms and is beyond repair. After extensive searching we have located a specialist company who manufactures similar signs and we are in the process of agreeing a design with a view to having a replacement installed later this year.

The lych gates at the Burial Ground remain in very poor condition and funding remains elusive but we continue to try.

The Parish Council website continues to provide information to residents and would like to thank Mr Tierney for his work in this area.

In May Tendring District Council published additional revisions to their draft Local Plan but there were no significant implications for our Parish.

Disappointingly, vandalism has been prevalent this year with the new notice board at Sparrows Corner being broken open and pulled off the wall and was beyond repair so was removed and we have no plans to replace it. Graffiti has also been sprayed on a number of our bus shelters and road signs around the village. The phone box at Sparrows Corner has also been subject to repeated vandalism and is in a very poor state and consequently BT are in the process of having it removed.

Military helicopters operating around the Parish have also been an issue again this year causing disturbance to residents and livestock and have been reported to the Commanding Officer at RAF Wattisham.

Chairman thanked all Councillors, Clerk and Cllr Erskine for their support, time and effort they have given for the benefit of the Parish.

**Public Transport Report:** Mr Brown reported that there were no changes to our service but time keeping remains an issue. With the old bus station shutting down we lost the local drivers with their local knowledge of the areas. Chairman thanked Mr Brown.

**Finance Report:** A preliminary report has been prepared and circulated, with no questions. This is available to view upon request.

**Highways:** The flooding at The Soils has reoccurred yet again this year and has once again been referred to Highways who are insisting the responsibility lies with the land-owners who have not maintained their ditches. ECC are pursuing the matter.

Parking at the school continues to be an issue but following last year's resurfacing, the zig zags have now finally been re-painted. A parking order is being progressed which will make the parking restrictions in this area legally enforceable and will hopefully improve the safety of our children in this area.

Despite the second mild winter in a row, numerous pot holes around the Parish continue to be an issue. Miss Booth reported that the pot holes in Queen Street and Back Lane have now been filled in.

New "Village Gates" have been installed at the Sparrows Corner end of the Village, but they have been located in a position that is causing some visibility issues to residents. We have contacted Highways to see if they can be relocated. Cllr Erskine has also requested ECC look into the location and size of them.

Fly tipping has occurred in the Parish with incidents at The Soils, Colchester Road, Stones Green, The Avenue and at the Burial Ground.

**Pre-School Report:** Oakey Dokeys provide sessional child care for children aged between 2 and 5 years old from Great and Little Oakley, Stones Green, Wix, Harwich and Dovercourt. There are currently 40 children registered and a waiting list for September. In recent years their continued "Outstanding" rating from Ofsted coupled with excellent provision for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities has seen an increase in the number of children with SEND. Whilst they receive some government funding towards extra staffing/resources to meet the needs of these children, they are currently focusing their fundraising efforts towards a sensory building which will enable them to have a separate area where one-to-one teaching could take place.

**Church Report:** Mr Tierney reported the departure of Reverend Francis Mason, our Community Priest since Summer 2013. All Saint's Church has seen another year filled with a wide range of activities with a service of worship held every Sunday with a regular pattern of Holy Communion services on first and third Sundays of each month. Services are listed on the inside cover of Coast to Coast. The Choir has been busy with the traditional Candlelight and Crib service at Christmas as well as the Christmas Market at Manningtree and supporting the Deanery choir at St Nicholas' Church in Harwich for the recording of the BBC Radio Essex Christmas Carol Service which was broadcast on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

**Village Hall Report:** Mr Thompson has reported to us that the long term plans for a New Village Hall are progressing as an integral part of the proposed housing development off Beaumont Road. He has consulted current Hall user groups and shown them preliminary details and hopes to be in a position to mount an exhibition in the Village Hall in April/May which will provide full details of his proposals.

Despite the progress towards a replacement Hall, the current Village Hall must be kept in a serviceable condition. Mrs Ling and others have done a fantastic job fundraising towards a new floor, raising in excess of £2,500. We have been successful in securing matched funding. Chairman thanked Mrs Ling and everyone who have been involved, for their fantastic efforts.

Un-authorized parking has been an issue this year and one particular resident has been requested several times to desist. It has been agreed that if the problem continues a lockable barrier will have to be installed to prevent access to the car park when the Hall is not in use.

On a more positive note, the Art Club presented us with a striking painting of a Hare, which is on permanent loan to the Village Hall.

Chairman thanked Mrs Turner for all her hard work as Caretaker and Cleaner of the Hall.

**Playing Field Report:** Chairman reported that the play equipment on the Recreation Field continues to be well used and we were able to co-fund a new set of goal posts for the village football team this year. Following the 2013 winter storms, unfortunately the remaining two oaks on the edge of the field had to be taken down on the advice of a Tree Surgeon and our insurance company.

Sadly and despite our best efforts we have been unable to satisfactorily renegotiate the lease for the field at Sparrows Corner with Tendring District Council. This area is included in the emerging Local Plan as designated open amenity green space so this should preclude any redevelopment. TDC have subsequently advertised this field for sale which happened before we issued a Notice under Section 27.

Chairman closed Annual Assembly at 7.35pm.

Signed.....

Dated.....