

Littlebury Parish Council
Chairman's Report – May 2022

As I write this report, our lives are getting back into a regular routine, the last two years have been hard and challenging so we look forward to a brighter future.

Since the last Annual General Meeting the parish council have lost three councillors, Colin Durrant, Claudia Haisman-Green and Joanna Hancock, we miss their input and thank them for the helpful service they have given.

The District Councillors Neil Gregory and Richard Pavitt attend our meetings regularly and in June we welcomed Paul Gadd, who was the newly elected County Councillor. He too attends regularly, and we are grateful to all for the help and assistance they give us throughout the year.

This last year has seen a defibrillator installed at Catmere End and we are now in the enviable position of having three defibrillators within our parish. Thanks to Mike Scott who maintains them on a regular basis.

The Network Rail Infrastructure inquiry from 2017 looked to close the level crossing, which carries a public footpath between Peggys Walk and the Cinder Path up to Merton Place. Following objections raised on this proposed closure, in March 2022 the Secretary of State agreed with the Inspector's view that this Order of closure would not be suitable or convenient and therefore it was good news to hear that this footpath will remain open!

Finance - We agreed that an increase was necessary regarding the precept budget, being aware of higher prices the figure was agreed at £34,500. As a guide to those who are unaware the precept covers a wide range of amenities. Grass and hedge cutting, tree maintenance/surveys, verge cutting, playground inspections/maintenance, street lighting, Village Views, rent, Insurance, Clerk's salary, and the fortnightly green waste collection service.

Seasoned complaints are speeding traffic and inconsiderate parking, and these continue to be an issue. With parking, it is not an easy solution as it often just moves the problem further along the road. Parking on corners is extremely dangerous and should be avoided. Residents have asked for a crossing in the centre of the village, this is not possible due to the proximity of the bends. Our main road has been the relief road for the M11 since 1979 and we have gradually seen the volume of traffic grow.

Another complaint is dog fouling, if you are a responsible dog owner you don't need to be told, that clearing up after your dog is essential. There are dog bins situated around and if these happen to be full, or vandalised, you can take the bag home and put into your own black bin.

Community Speedwatch can help to be effective in slowing traffic; if you're interested in giving a little of your time your services would be most welcome. If your concerns are related to road surface issues you can plot these yourself by going onto the Essex Highways website.

Prior to moving from the village Joanna Hancock put together a parish survey; the results were gathered, and a summary printed in the Village Views. Residents who had shown interest in volunteering were then put into contact with the various organisations. Groups have said that when they contacted individuals, they had found the initial enthusiasm had faded.

However, I am pleased to say that The Bumpy at Littlebury Green has flourished. Jan Menell has, over the years, taken interest in this old chalk pit and has charted its history for all to enjoy. Once the heavy work started it was both Philip Marns and Mike Scott who worked tirelessly on this, and through their challenging efforts have managed to take the project forward. There is now an active Bumpy Volunteer Group thus ensuring this will be well maintained in the future. It is a credit to everyone on what has been achieved. An Open Day will be held on 4 June.

Last year we discussed future growth within the parish; UDC announced they were preparing a draft Local Plan (Call for Sites) to replace the 2005 plan, they were contacting landowners for suggestions on sites, and we await UDC's decision on this which they are due to announce in June.

The cost of oil and electricity is affecting everyone; Littlebury PC was invited to work with Saffron Walden Community Energy and UDC on this new project. Questionnaires had been delivered to Littlebury residents, heat analysis had been conducted on some houses and results shown at the Open Day on 23rd April. The event was well supported with both exhibitors and visitors. Further update on this when available.

Littlebury, Littlebury Green and Catmere End will all have various events to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. The Parish Council applied for a grant from UDC and were successful, the money will be divided accordingly. It is hoped that villagers will support these events.

Thanks go to the individuals in the parish who give their time freely, a special mention to Ann Warren, who has been our magazine distributor for an exceptionally long time, and we were fortunate that Valerie Green took on this role.

We have seen true community spirit when Jo Twigden set about raising money by holding a raffle, to get a new picnic table for Littlebury Recreation ground. She exceeded all expectations and was able to purchase two tables with her fund raising. Thanks also to the Recreation Committee for financing the installation.

My thanks go to my fellow Parish Councillors, for all their help and assistance, to Tracy Coston our clerk. Tracy has been our clerk for over 20 years and her knowledge is invaluable, and therefore is such an asset to the council

We are a small community and rely on volunteers, impressions from the survey mentioned the friendly aspect of the parish and that it's a beautiful part of the Essex countryside in which we live. The last two years have shown how neighbours look after neighbours – this is what it is all about – it's the essence of village life.

If you would like to volunteer, we have vacancies on the Parish Council and Speedwatch, or you may want to go litterpicking to help clean up the countryside. If any of these positions are of interest, please contact Tracy Coston on 01223 894462 or email clerk@littlebury.org.uk. Remember, Tracy is the first point of contact regarding any Parish Council matters.

Jean Cowell

Chair – Littlebury Parish Council 15.05.2022

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