

Great Bentley Parish Council

Chairman's Report 2011

Since our last meeting, as your Parish Council, we have been consistently trying to achieve efficiencies and looking for ways to improve our environment and surroundings as well as looking after the Parishes interests.

We have had one or two changes this year with the loss of David Gibbon and Ian Morton as Parish Councillors and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their sterling work for the parish.

Ian has been a great help with advice on insurance matters which has proved invaluable, especially with regard to the ever-changing legislation and the problematic issues that can arise with regard to insurance relating to the green itself.

David has been a stalwart and has always offered a helping hand to carry out any works in and around the green from the grading of the track to the relaying of the football pitch in association with George. Both will be very much missed.

Thankfully both Councillors are still keen to be involved with the Parish Council and I am sure in the future we shall continue to rely on their knowledge and assistance.

However, at the same time, we have been able to reinforce our members and welcome Linda McWilliams who has managed to find the time from her other commitments to support the village in a more direct way at parish level, but also continues to represent us at district level. We welcome Linda back to the Parish Council and look forward to her input and advice.

In addition to Linda, we welcome Kevin Plummer and Luke Edwards to the Council. Kevin is a familiar face to many of us and therefore needs little introduction other than to say he is most welcome and we are pleased to have him. Luke Edwards is one of our youngest Parish Councillors, after myself, and we welcome the hopefully slightly different perspective that he may have being of a slightly different generation.

As I previously mentioned, Linda McWilliams continues with her good work in supporting us and the people of Great Bentley at District level and our County Councillor, Derek Robinson, works tirelessly on our behalf concerning matters between the local and county arenas, especially Highways.

Our Clerk, Kate Mayhew, continues to show willingness and enthusiasm for this challenging role and continues to be a worthy asset to the Parish Council.

1. Street Lighting

Through Robert Taylor's continued vigilance, repairs to our street lights have been carried out quickly and efficiently. After the consultation last year to decide whether or not to withdraw certain street lighting after a certain hour, it was agreed that the status quo should remain and we continue to be responsible for a number of street lights in and around the Parish. We would ask members of the public to be vigilant as to when a light is out and report this directly to the Parish Clerk in order that appropriate action can be taken.

2. Affordable Housing

The affordable housing at Aingers Green seems to have bedded down nicely and people living there are now contributing to the community. The properties are being well maintained and looked after, and a year on we see the whole scheme as being a great success. A further Housing Needs Survey has been carried out and the Council will be acting on this further in the near future.

3. The Parish Community Resource Centre

I still believe people like the idea of having a centre where they can liaise with the Parish Council, maybe only occasionally, and view planning application drawings although it is now perhaps easier than previously, to view these on line through the Planning Portal. The centre is under constant review but the criticism of it is much less than it was, as people start to appreciate the positive benefit that it brings. It is also still used as a base by the PCSO. It has also been decided that this facility be shared with the local Play Group and therefore the cost to the Parish has reduced. It was deemed that this was a good idea insofar as it still allowed the opportunity for people to come and chat and talk through their concerns with the Clerk but, at the same time, allowed us to reduce the cost base significantly.

4. Young People and Activities

With the election of Luke Edwards to the Parish Council, I am hoping that he will take a greater depth of interest in young people and their activities and bring to the attention of the Parish Council anything further that we are able to do to help with the young in our community. The Parish Council continues to encourage young people to participate in all forms of sport and outdoor activity thus reducing the amount of troublesome behaviour within the village. The Parish Council also supports the Football and Cricket Club, appreciating both their promotion of sport and social responsibility and team building. However, I would once again ask both of the Clubs to be mindful of the protection of the green to ensure that it is treated with respect on days when damage could occur.

I would also remind members of particularly the football club about the bad language.

5. Green

Bikers on the Green

The Parish Council's position remains unchanged with regard to not giving permission for bikers to come on to the green. However, we still need to manage the situation as best we can and at the same time remain vigilant to ensure that the rules and regulations of the council are upheld.

Green Football Pitches

The proposal has been made to improve the playing surfaces of the football pitches and this is currently being discussed and managed by the Green Committee. The current proposal is that this improvement will be at no cost to the Parish Council and will not only provide a better playing surface for the footballing community but will also improve the green for all of us.

6. PCSO

We have had a challenging time with our PCSO over the last 12 months because of a number of circumstances with regard to change of personnel and to changes in policy of the Police

themselves. Therefore for a period of time we were without a PCSO and were looking at other opportunities in order to carry over the cover that the PCSO had previously allowed. However, following meetings between Linda Belgrove of the Police Authority and the Council, we believe there has been a sea change in attitude which will hopefully allow us to have a familiar face back on the beat. This will hopefully pan out over the next few months.

7. Parking

Parking is still a problem within the village but could be easily improved greatly if just a little more consideration was given to others and people stopped parking of the double yellow lines. Negotiations have been concluded with Network Rail and an application has been submitted to Tendring District Council. We are hopeful that this will be approved and will allow some long term parking for people working in the village which will then hopefully free up space outside shops for short term parking. It will also hopefully allow further space for people that are wishing to commute. We hope that this proves successful and is able to operate as a free car park. However the Council have reserved the right to monitor and change this should the car park prove so popular that it attracts the wrong type of parking from outside the Parish.

8. The Pond

The pond continues to look healthy and the ecology thrives.

9. Surgery Parking

With the continual support and help from the Surgery itself, the number of people parking on the green has reduced.

10. Fly Tipping

This problem has got worse.

It is very sad that litter continues to be dumped out of cars along our roadsides and verges, together with rubbish being left in lay-bys in and around the village. It's lazy and it just makes everywhere look awful.

The Parish Council are aware that some individuals are collecting this up at their own expense and for this we would like to thank you. Once again, I urge you if you see anyone littering our

village, please report it to Tendring District Council or even us and we will do it on your behalf. We have got to do all we can to stop this.

11. Highways Verges

The Parish Council continues to cut the highways verges and other areas of land for the County Council. Therefore, this work is carried out more often and at more appropriate times of the year.

12. License for use of green for entertainment

Anyone wishing to use the green for organised functions must have written permission and sign up to the conditions that the Council has to apply. Once again, I would like to remind members of the public that if you would like to erect signage on the green for a limited amount of time for any reason, you must have written permission.

Finally I would like to thank once again the other members of the Parish Council and its helpers, our wardens, caretakers and contractors, and this year in particular our past Councillors.

As I say every year.....Councillors.....you work on behalf of all members of the community without reward and sometimes with criticism. I wish to thank you for your efforts this year, not as your past Chairman but as a member of the community of Great Bentley.

Members of the public. Please engage with us. Its no good saying you are too busy. Look around this table we are all busy people and yet we all try to make a positive contribution to our community. At our meetings sometimes there are too few people here, and generally it's the same faces. Encourage your friends to become part of the community it can be sometimes dull but its more often fun, and you get a sense of achievement in that you have helped someone for no reward.

I will now ask the public if they have anything they would like to discuss within the report. I shall keep the timing of this brief as we have a long evening ahead.