



Pebmarsh Parish Council

Chairman: Cllr Harry Anderson

Clerk: Mrs P Potter, 20 Gore Lane, Rayne, CM77 6TU: 07790 598363; pebmarshpc@hotmail.com

Minutes of the Pebmarsh Annual Parish Assembly Tuesday 10 March 2015

Present:

Cllr Harry Anderson (Chairman)

Cllr Simon Nott

Cllr Jim Holder

Mrs P Potter (Clerk)

County Councillor David Finch

District Councillor Anthony Shelton

35 members of the public

1. Apologies for absence

None

2. Minutes of the Previous Annual Parish Assembly

- Held 20 May 2014 – these were agreed and signed as a true record.

3. Report from County Councillor David Finch

County Cllr David Finch attended to present his report, which had previously been circulated and is appended to these minutes. He summarised the main points:

- ECC budget was passed in February for 2015/16, which has frozen Council Tax for the fifth year in a row, saving the average resident £355 during that time.
- A record level of investment in the capital programme was outlined in the budget, investing over £270M into key infrastructure, such as schools, roads, flood defences and superfast broadband.
- An increase in school places is planned with investment of over £200m, supported by a central government grant of £41.4m
- There is significant investment in roads, footpaths, bridges and rights of way, with £130m going into highways.
- Quiet Lanes are being adopted by ECC to help calm traffic. These areas will have a ban on HGVs and will have a 20mph speed limit.
- £23m will be invested into flood defence schemes. Expected rollout for 2015 and early 2016, to enable a further 45,000 connections reaching 87% of premises in Essex, with 95% by 2017/18.
- Children in Care: numbers are now below 1,000, falling by 28% over the last two years.

- The number of young people who are NEET (not in employment, education or training) is at an all time low. The current percentage stands at 4.4%.
- A new Park & Ride facility is to open in Colchester.
- Essex Energy Switch: almost 9,000 households have signed up to this scheme over the last 12 months.

Cllr Anderson asked Cllr Finch about the Quiet Lane scheme and asked if they would be able to put forward The Street for this scheme. Cllr Finch didn't think this would be possible but asked the Parish Council to put forward two lanes which we wish to designate, to the Local Highways Panel.

A member of the public asked if the speed restriction and the restriction on the size of the vehicle were able to be separated, so that a lane could have the 20mph speed limit but not the HGV ban, and vice versa, but Cllr Finch confirmed that the two criteria go hand in hand.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Finch for attending and giving his report to the Parish.

4. Report from District Councillor Anthony Shelton

Cllr Shelton attended the meeting and said that he was always pleased to see a good turnout at an Annual Assembly. Cllr Shelton gave his annual report of the achievements at BDC over the last year, a copy of which is appended to these minutes. He summarised the main points:

Priorities on Place:

- To keep our district clean and tidy: this proved to be a successful year with the anti litter campaign bringing a 68% reduction in 'food on the go' litter in the District, also resulting in a 41% reduction in Essex overall.
- New refuse and recycling routes – these have been made more cost efficient and shown improvements in the service.
- Solar panels have been installed on the District's leisure centres, to reduce the cost of energy and the district's carbon footprint.

Promote safe and healthy living:

- New leisure centre built and opened in Witham and refurbished the leisure centres in Braintree and Halstead. This has increased the number of people using the centres by 9%.
- Facilitated the staging of the Tour de France.
- Refurbished four play areas in the District.

Prosperity:

- BDC have supported the set up of 75 business start ups, in conjunction with Ignite.
- Created a corporate apprenticeship programme.
- Invested 250K extending business broadband.
- Invested £1M into a Local Authority Mortgage Scheme in conjunction with Lloyds Bank to help first time buyers.
- Built a new affordable car park in Witham for commuters.
- Enabled the delivery of 173 affordable homes in the District.
- New rate relief scheme of up to £1000 for 536 businesses in the District.

Performance:

- BDC have reduced Council Tax by 1%.
- Aimed to maximise income from current assets, which resulted in £1M extra income.
- Achieved high levels of customer satisfaction across services.
- Improved operational efficiency of waste services and reduced costs by £200,000 pa.

- Introduced 'My Location' on the BDC website, for residents to easily access information about where they live.
- Supported the Boundary Commission to review the democratic representation for the District, which has resulted in a reduction from 60 to 49 District Councillors from May 2015.

Partnership:

- Health and Wellbeing Panel: to help reduce health inequalities in the District.
- Engaged with strategic businesses to support key economic infrastructure improvements.
- Established a District Employment and Skills Board and conducted an employer skills review to inform actions to address employer skill needs

Cllr Shelton also informed the Council that there are monies to be applied for via the Rural Community Council of Essex RCCE to ask for any help they can offer for schemes we have.

This was Cllr Shelton's last council meeting as he is standing down after 16 years service. He kindly said that he has enjoyed working with the Parish, as a community which has achieved much together.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Shelton for all his help over many years of service and wished him well for the future.

6. Chairman's and Parish Councillor Reports

Cllr Anderson read out his Chairman's Report, which is appended to these minutes and summarised below:

- Planning: We deal with approximately 2 or 3 applications per month.
- Roads: As recent speed surveys didn't show average speeds much above 30mph, we are not able to receive substantial traffic calming measures. However, ECC have put in extra 30mph roundels and 'slow' markings along The Street, by the school. Pot holes are regularly reported to ECC.
- Defibrillator: The Parish Council now owns the telephone box kiosk, which cost £1 to buy. Sufficient money has been raised for the equipment, which will be installed as soon as possible. There will be a public meeting about this, nearer the time. This area will be tidied up and a new Parish noticeboard will be put up outside the pub.
- Playground: A lot of work has been undertaken on the playground this year, following up and maintaining the work which was done last year. Chris Mortimer regularly inspects the playground and Cllr Tufnell is the contact for any problems.
- Affordable Housing: The current S106 agreement criteria for letting the homes has recently been altered to ensure that it is more relevant for those who have a strong local connection and this is currently going through the legal process.
- Footpaths: Cllr Nott is the contact for any problems with the footpaths and currently coordinates the maintenance of them, in conjunction with ECC. Last year, ECC agreed to pay for 2 cuts for footpaths, but for the coming season, they are only prepared to pay for one cut, which we are currently in negotiations with them about. The footbridge over Pebmarsh Lake on FP33 is to be repaired and this may be closed until it is repaired.
- War Memorial Renovation: The Parish Council financed, with assistance from the Church, the renovation of the War Memorial, in time for Remembrance Day in 2014, which commemorated the start of the First World War.
- Finance: The Parish Council part of the Council Tax bill has not been increased this year, and currently represents about 2% of a Band D property bill.
- The Police don't attend meetings any more, however, they do hold regular public meetings, which any resident can attend to listen to reports and ask questions.

A report was provided to the meeting, to show the core crime rate for Pebmarsh, which in 2014/15 shows two burglaries of sheds or outbuildings, compared to 10 of these in the previous year, along with 3 thefts from motor vehicles.

Village Hall Committee Annual Report

The report to date, was read and is appended to these minutes. It was noted, that over the years, the Pebmarsh Country Show – which was arranged by Mark Collett, raised over £60,000 towards the Village Hall. This is a lasting legacy to Mark, who sadly passed away earlier this year.

7. John Nott Charity Report

The Annual Report was read out to the meeting by Cllr Anderson and is appended to these minutes. Currently, 11 households, with a total of 14 people, benefit from the Charity.

8. Public Forum: Telecommunications Mast

The Chairman introduced this item and explained that at present, there is not an official planning application in place as yet, or a final agreement with the landowner for this site. Currently, the location being discussed is land north east of Cricks Farm and the height of the proposed mast is also at present unconfirmed.

The Parish Council had prepared a document, outlining the current position, which was handed out at this meeting, a copy of which is appended to these minutes. It was clarified that the point of the discussion today is for a general consultation of what people make of this at present.

A discussion followed, which was commenced by the landowner who is currently in negotiation with the company to put the mast on his land. He feels strongly that the village should not be a 'not spot'. After the previous meeting, he put the site forward as he believes that a mobile phone signal in the village is valuable. He stressed that this move was not for his financial gain, but to ensure that the village has mobile coverage. He also stressed the importance that everyone is able to have their say about the proposals at this meeting and during the planning application process.

Close neighbours to the proposed mast are very concerned that the location will be 250m away from their house. They are also concerned about the height of the mast, which is as yet undecided, but could be anything from 22m to 25m high and also about the fact that the mast could be made taller in the future. They believe that the proximity will be detrimental to their house as a listed building and that there are better locations in the vicinity, such as a location North East of the field, as this wouldn't be near any dwellings. They understand that health issues are not a valid planning objection, but are concerned that there is still a need to be cautious.

A question was asked about the amount of coverage proposed, as the main 'not spot' in the village is in the 'dip'. In the last set of proposals, there was a claim that it would be serving approximately 70 dwellings – from Mill Lane to the pub, and up to the football pitch.

The landowner of the proposed site said that he is currently chasing up this information, as he will not be in favour of the mast if it doesn't reach where it is needed.

A resident from Cross End asked if there are there any other proposed sites or will this be the last one offered. The Chair replied that the first time around, the company looked at about six sites which they rejected one by one.

The main site which was favoured by a number of objectors last time, was north of New Wood, but this was rejected because it would be too much of an eyesore. The only two others left to look at were Hunts Hall and the site being currently proposed. As far as the Parish Council are aware there have not been any other proposed sites. It must also be remembered that the landowners permission is required to take a site forward.

The resident said he was against this site because of the proximity to an old building such as Valiants Farm. Thinking back to the house proposed behind the Kings Head as being in the setting of a listed building and being refused – is this not the same point?

The Chairman commented that the distance in this case is a bit further away and the view that one has of it from this part of the village is blighted by pylons. Another resident asked if the antennae can be put on the existing pylons. It was explained that there are substantial problems with siting on pylons, mainly to do with safety.

In answer to a further question, the Chairman confirmed that this is a government subsidised scheme and that all four providers will be supplied from the mast.

A resident commented that masts like this always raise concerns but urged the meeting to think carefully before opposing it as the benefit to large numbers of people are immense. He travels extensively and is appalled at how bad the coverage is in the UK. He said that the sooner that something is put in for the village the better.

Two residents commented that if this was the only site in the village, they would bear it but they believe there are other sites which are available. Cllr Nott, who had recently been in negotiation with the company about a site on his land reported that this had not been suitable in the end, as initial proposals were changed so extensively they were not acceptable.

It was asked whether the rejected sites are available to look at and are they able to give the reasoning for each one? The Chairman replied that the previous sites were all rejected on technical issues.

The discussion returned to the issue of the lack of mobile phone coverage in the village, where a resident commented that a good signal is extremely important, especially for businesses. A lot of vehicles get lost looking for businesses in and around Pebmarsh and they are unable to phone for directions, meaning that they travel up and down mainly unsuitable roads many more times than necessary, trying to locate an address.

Points were made regarding the fact that there is not a lot of funding available to Harlequin to complete this project and it was asked whether any grant funding is available to help out. The answer to this was not known but it was surmised that as this is a government funded scheme, it was unlikely.

The Council was asked when the planning application will go in, but the Chairman confirmed that this was not known at this point. A final agreement has not yet been reached and details have not been ironed out, such as the height of the mast.

It was commented that it would be helpful if parishioners could be there when the height measurement equipment is put up, so that the height can tangibly be seen.

A parishioner asked when the company's contract runs out, which the Chairman said that he would ask them and come back to her.

The impact on the footpath was asked about. The landowner replied that the mast and its compound would be entirely on their land, away from the footpath by a considerable amount, approximately 30m from the road, just in from the footpath and surrounded by the fence. It would stand between two fairly tall trees.

A final question was asked regarding who would be maintaining the roads and verges, once the construction of the mast begins? The Chairman said that he would add this to the list of questions for Harlequin

The meeting ended with the Chairman thanking everyone for attending and putting forward their views, which had been helpful. Further developments would be communicated via the village email 'round robin', to which everyone was encouraged to sign up to.

9. Public Forum: General

A parishioner asked if it would be possible for Pebmarsh to have 'please drive carefully through our village' signs put up, underneath the existing 'Pebmarsh' signs at the village entrances. The Clerk will take this up with ECC Highways.

10. Closure

The meeting closed at 8.30pm.

Signed

Dated