

FRINDSBURY EXTRA PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17

It's time again to review the Council's activities throughout the past year.

We continue to respond to consultation on planning applications and last year made comments on 86 applications. Ten years ago the number was 70, so we've seen an increase in spite of the alterations to planning law that now allows small extensions, porches, etc to be constructed without planning consent.

Linked with planning is the new Local Plan being prepared by Medway Council. This looks at housing and other land use between now and 2035. Medway has to provide 30,000 dwellings, although homes constructed in the last few years count towards that figure. The Parish Council has recently responded to the consultation on a draft plan and favours the use of urban brownfield sites, with higher rise developments in the towns and conversion of redundant industrial or retail units. Of concern is the numbers of housing for the Hoo Peninsula, which will increase traffic on the A228 and A289, which merge at Four Elms roundabout. This is already difficult enough, especially for traffic emerging from Hoo Road. There is also mention of relocating businesses from the Medway City Estate to Kingsnorth and making the Estate mixed use including housing. Again, this would put additional pressure on the roundabouts as domestic traffic will want to use the A289 to access the M2 and traffic for the relocated businesses, including HGVs, will have to use the A228 Four Elms Hill. Both sets of traffic will increase the pressure on all roundabouts but especially Four Elms. There are plans in the pipeline for works to the roundabouts and I expect the Medway councillors will talk about this in their report in a minute. The plans include a footbridge which is a priority and needs constructing as soon as possible. We know that children attend the schools in Chattenden and Hoo and we've all seen mothers with pushchairs and young children trying to cross the roundabout, which is highly dangerous and it's unacceptable that people are forced to do this.

Our footpaths officer Robert Taylor and his assistant Oliver Hulf both retired at the end of 2016. Oliver concentrated on the public rights of way in Upnor. Our new footpaths officer is Anne Roscow. So far she has checked the paths during the winter, but the growth season is now upon us and she will be out busy with the strimmer, keeping paths clear. She could probably do with some assistance, so if you know of a keen walker who would be prepared to volunteer to help, please let us know.

The land we own is being maintained well by our contractor, who was given a 3-year contract from this month. It was awarded on the basis that all the open space at Liberty Park, which we have named Wainscott Fields, would have been handed over to us. I regret to say that it has taken a year for nothing to have happened. The area where the builders compound was is still full of stones just under the grass and is a dip in the rest of the grass. The wild area on the other side is just as wild, with the scrub and self-seeded trees getting bigger. I am still trying to get the developer to do something about it. Unfortunately as we speak my contact is on paternity leave and it will be the week after next before I can get on the case again.

The open space at Fordwich Drive is looking good. Our contractors are mowing it regularly and we commissioned a tree report, followed by tree works in the winter. We put a letter round to all properties facing the green to warn them and also told them that when we receive the development money for the Templars development off Brompton Farm Road

we will be replacing the play area. We had several emails from residents thanking us and saying how nice the area is now.

We are in the process of trying to acquire the play area at Schooner Walk in Lower Upnor. There is a substantial amount of development money for play in the area but this cannot be used on land owned by private companies and it needs the parish council to own the land for Medway Council to use the money, which has to be spent by the end of 2017 or it goes back to the developer.

While in Lower Upnor, so to speak, Cllr Hicks will no doubt update us on the Lower Upnor Riverside Project. This ground to a halt during the recession due to lack of available funding that we could go for. Now there is a Heritage Lottery scheme for the Hoo Peninsula and luckily Upnor is counted as being on the Peninsula. The bid will be handled by the RSPB, but it was suggested the project was an ideal one to put forward and Peter Hicks has been battling with a pre-application application.

The interest in the allotments is sporadic, with 2 plots now virtually unworkable. As the new allotment site promised by the new owners and restorers of the Tithe Barn has not yet materialised, the issue of the unworkable plots will have to be addressed.

Sadly we lost former councillor David Miller last summer. He had been a councillor for over 25 years when he stood down at the 2015 elections. He had been a co-ordinator for the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal and a donation was made to them in his memory. We also made our usual grant for the poppy wreath which was laid in the foyer here on Armistice Day as usual and grants were also made to the Memorial Hall.

Councillors continue to represent the parish outside the parish council. Cllr Williams attended the police liaison meetings and reported back to the Council and Cllr Onimole is our neighbourhood watch representative. Cllr Moore continued as Chairman of the local area committee of the Kent Association of Local Councils. Cllr Buckwell was our other representative. Cllr Hicks with his Medway Councillor hat on was chairman of Medway's Rural Liaison Committee and Cllr Coomber was the parish representative and also the committee vice-chairman. Cllr Moore also sits on it as the KALC representative. Cllr Mrs Mitchell is the Council's nominee on the Hall Management Committee. Cllr Etheridge liaises with the publishers of our magazine.

Our Webmaster Clive Stanley continues to provide excellent service but is always looking for fresh photographs and items of news. Please send anything through to me and I will pass it on.

Otherwise Council business goes on as usual, with the routine of monthly meetings except August, end of year accounts to prepare in April, Annual Parish Meeting in April or May, audit annual return to sign and send off in May, budget setting in November, completion of the precept form in December or January, or we'll get no money for the following year and so on.

I would like end by thanking the Chairman and all councillors for their help and support to me personally and for the work they've all put in on a purely voluntary basis to ensure the parish has proper facilities and is a pleasant place to live.

Roxana Brammer
Parish Clerk

April 2017