

## **Chairman's Report to the Annual Parish Meeting on 13th May 2015**

Just before I start my report on last year, I would like to introduce our new councillors. As you know there were parish council elections as well as the general election this year. Although there was no need for an election in Playford, now, after several years of only having five councillors, we have seven.

The new councillors are Adrian Melrose, Neil Tibble and returning after a few years absence, Ted Herrington.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Steve Hudson our District Councillor for many years. He has given the council a great deal of support over the years and in particular last year when despite being ill, he helped us with a particularly difficult planning application. We wish him well for the future.

I have one other person I would like to say a huge thank you to and that's Veronica Bunbury, who after five years, stood down as a councillor at this election. She was a really valuable member of the council not only at the meetings but also by tirelessly carrying out regular inspections of the playground, footpaths and other parts of the village and also, by keeping the glass bins emptied. She has given me, as chairman, a huge amount of support. We will find it hard to replace her valuable contribution.

Now to my chairman's report

As I reported this time last year, during 2014/15 we intended to operate within a very tight budget and have managed this fairly successfully. The precept for 2015/2016 will be kept at last year's level of £4500.

We have also had several grant applications approved and this has allowed us to instigate various projects without taking money from the precept account.

The new developments at Badgers Bank and Sevenoaks are almost finished and personally I think that all three buildings look good and in keeping with the various styles within the village. We have had several planning applications this year mostly for small alterations to existing buildings most notably the renovation of Glenham. The Parish Council reviews any planning application on its merits and on the impact it will have on the village and its inhabitants. However, it also strives to be impartial until the plans have been scrutinized and discussed.

### **East Anglian One**

Just as an update, the Offshore Windfarm project is still going ahead but with reduced capacity. The government brought in new rules for funding last July and although East Anglia ONE limited was awarded support it was for less mega watts than was originally planned.

As far as I can see for the information given out, this will make little difference to the planned cable laying. They do now, owing to the reduced capacity have to connect to the national grid via high voltage alternating current (HVAC) rather than high voltage direct current (HVDC) technology and have to reapply in late May to the Planning Inspectorate to allow the alternating current (AC) option to be accommodated. Then once this application is processed by the Planning Inspectorate the information will be published on their website and directly affected parties will be contacted.

**The other off shore project - East Anglia THREE** is at a much earlier stage. A development consent order needs to be applied for which will probably be in November this year.

However, with the change in the funding regime, they say they are going to have to introduce a number of changes to the project to make sure they receive funding. The consultation on the changes is likely to run from the end of May to the end of June, but we waiting to hear how this will have any effect on Playford.

## **Highways**

The issue of the verge and hedge cutting on Butts Road and other roads around the village is always an ongoing problem. This year, due to the excessive amount of rain we had in the autumn and early winter the main problem is the wear and erosion of the margins between the tarmac and the verges. The highways department has inspected Butts Road and has declared that they are not significantly damaged to list them for repair at the moment. Much of the damage can be attributed to large agricultural vehicles having to pull to one side to allow cars to pass. The parish council has contacted all the relevant farmers and we have to thank John Fenton and Ralph for attending an informal meeting with councillors where our concerns were discussed. I think that there is now some understanding of the other parties' worries.

## **Auction**

Early in 2014 I was approached by a lady in Hampshire who had found five original paintings by Geoffrey Buckingham Pocock who was Anne Airy's husband. All the paintings were of scenes around Playford. After consultation with SALC about whether the PC could purchase the paintings, I bought them personally and arranged with the PC an auction which took place in June. It proved very successful and after costs the council received a grand total of £810.

## **Projects**

During this year, the village sign and notice board have been renovated. Jerry Hearle has made a new notice board with glass doors which works very well and there has been no sign of condensation during the winter. Titchmarsh and Goodwin who originally carved the village sign were approached to see if they would renovate it. They do not actually take on this sort of work, but one of their employees, Paul, said he would take on the task if we donated £50 to the children's hospice. As it turned out the sign was in a much worse state than he or we thought. He spent a good deal of time on it as it was very rotten in places. However, it is now back in position and we donated £100 to the charity as it had been a much more time consuming job than originally thought. As much of the rot seems to have been caused by it being under the tree, we asked Jerry to put a small roof-like structure over the top to deflect the water. We also need someone to apply teak oil to it once a month to protect it so if anyone would like to volunteer we will provide the teak oil????

We have also bought a new bench for the triangle and have remembered Geoffrey Buckingham Pocock with a plaque on the back, and a new sand bin. Originally money for these projects was allocated from the money raised by the auction but subsequently we applied for and received a grant of £891.00 via Steve Hudson from the Enabling Communities fund.

We also, finally, managed to get the sand bins replaced which the council grass cutter had demolished two years ago.

## **Future projects**

Through the Outdoor Playspace scheme project we have been promised £1408.46 because of the building of the three new houses in the village. After a great deal of debate and consultation the PC has decided the best use for this would be a single basket ball unit as the money has to be spent on play equipment and not sports. Initially we were going to use the boules pitch as the hard area and position the net just outside the edge. However, there has been opposition to this by the boules club as they think that using it to run and bounce the ball would harm the surface.

This brought the project to a halt as we did not have the funds to provide another hard area. However, again Steve Hudson came to the rescue again and in March we applied for and received a further grant of £1000 to put down a new surface. We are at the moment waiting for the outdoor play space scheme to come back to us approving the new site which is between the fence and the goal, with the post being at the hall end facing towards the road.

**Concluding Remarks**

I would like to re-iterate my thanks for the help, commitment and support of my fellow councillors and also to Marian who keeps us on our toes. The support they have given me since taking over as Chairman has been tremendous.

Thank you

Joan Metcalfe