

**THE 120th VILLAGE CONFERENCE HELD AT THE
BELL CENTRE, GREAT BADDOW ON THURSDAY 10th APRIL 2014**

Prior to the official meeting, a reception had been arranged from 7.00 p.m. for parishioners to meet with Parish Councillors and City Councillors for informal talks.

The Chairman of the Council, Councillor Mrs Jannetta Sosin, welcomed everyone to the meeting. She introduced Cllr Trevor Miller, the Mayor of Chelmsford, who told the meeting about his year to date as the Mayor of Chelmsford. He has attended over 260 events so far and has been to Great Baddow on quite a number of occasions. Amongst other things, he has presented awards at the Youth Drop In Centre, inaugurated the new village sign, opened the new cricket practice facility in the Recreation Ground, planted a tree at Baddow Hall Junior School and presented the Centenary Award at the Parish Council's annual Community Celebration.

The business meeting of the Village Conference then started at 7.45pm.

1. **PRESENT**

Councillor Mrs Jannetta Sosin (Chairman of the Parish Council) presided over the meeting, which numbered the Mayor and Mayoress of Chelmsford, Cllr Trevor Miller and Mrs Maureen Miller, 9 members of the public and 9 parish councillors. The members of the public included Peter Carter (Essex Police), John Shaw (Chairman of the Great Baddow Parochial Charities), Glenn Finch (Clerk of the Great Baddow Parochial Charities), Dan Glading (Co-ordinator of the Neighbourhood Watch) and Richard Beck (Chairman of the Great Baddow Community Association).

2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Tim Hatcher and Mrs Veronica Sadowsky, David Saddington (Great Baddow Arts & Leisure Centre), Essex County Councillor Cllr Jenny Chandler and Station Commander Doug Sylvester (Fire Service).

3. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the previous Village Conference held on 11th April 2013, which had been circulated, were taken as read, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true record of the meeting. Proposed by Cllr Andrew Sosin and seconded by Cllr Mrs Sue Young.

4. **MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising.

5. **PRESENTATION AND REPORT FROM THE POLICE**

Peter Carter told the meeting about the crime figures for Great Baddow, which were 10% lower than the previous year. Dwelling burglaries and criminal damage had risen but vehicle crime, violent crime and theft had fallen. Burglary is a number one priority but it is a force wide problem. He expressed the wish that going forward to the next year will continue to be positive.

Parishioners' Questions and Comments

5.1 Cllr A Sosin told the meeting the situation about parking on the pavement and that the police use discretion in each circumstance. If there is no nuisance then the car would be left but if a car is causing an obstruction, it should be reported to the police.

5.2 Telephone fraud. This occurs with callers claiming to be police officers and they ask for bank details. They then say they have to check this and seem to ring off but they stay on the line. A member of the public asked if the telephone companies could stop this but was told that this is not so easy to do. Another member of the public did say that there is a limit as to how long it will hold.

- 5.3 A member of the public raised the issue of a large van parked at the junction of Maldon Road and Sandford Mill Lane. He said that this is a steep road with no pavements and that cyclists travel down the road very quickly. Mr Carter said that the matter will be passed to Pc Bernard to investigate. It was noted that the road is on the National Cycling Route and that a lot of cyclists now use the route, particularly after the Olympics. It was agreed that Essex County Council could be informed about the situation.
- 5.4 A member of the public asked about sentencing and Mr Carter said that this was not a police matter but is determined by the courts. Mr Carter said that the type of crimes are changing and that this may reflect the economic times.
- 5.5 Cllr Mrs J Sosin told the meeting that a number of PCSOs have been lost and were not going to be replaced. This is not good as the PCSOs were a deterrent.

6. **REPORT FROM THE NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH**

Mr Dan Glading, the Neighbourhood District Co-ordinator gave a report to the meeting. His ability to carry out the activities of the Neighbourhood Watch has been further reduced this year due to his medical condition and this had increased his wish to resign as the Co-ordinator. He does not wish to do so precipitately and would continue to work alongside the person who takes over. Attempts to find someone have not been successful and an article is to appear in the Great Baddow Times. Mr Glading said that there are still many members of the Watch and that he is optimistic that they all remember the basics about securing their homes and not believing every doorstep salesman. He also spoke about the Consent Streets Order being made by Chelmsford City Council and the burger van parked in Sandford Mill Lane.

7. **REPORT FROM THE FIRE SERVICE**

Station Commander Doug Sylvester had given his apologies to the meeting because the Great Baddow appliance had been called out to a major incident in Cambridgeshire.

8. **PARISH COUNCIL REPORT**

A detailed written report had been circulated to all those present providing details of the Council's activities during the 2013/2014 financial year. The Chairmen of the Committees then proceeded to expand verbally and answer questions on the report.

9. **GROUNDS AND ALLOTMENTS**

Cllr Mrs Sue Young thanked Peter Jeffrey and the team for the excellent work that they do throughout the year maintaining the various green spaces, cemetery and sports facilities. The weather during the last two years has done nothing to lighten the load. The office has also been busy with lease arrangements with the Cricket Club and the City Council and revisions to the allotment tenancy agreements.

The Council was awarded a gold award in the Best Kept Playing Field competition by the Essex Playing Field Association.

Both allotment sites are now almost fully tenanted and there is no waiting list. The Council is still trying to source more land for allotments. Terry Hull and Clive Arben continue to do an excellent job as the representatives for the Towerfield site and the Vicarage Lane site respectively. The Council also thanks Michele Dixon, who has worked with the Grounds Team, Mr Hull and Mr Arben to make certain that the sites are well managed and maintained.

The hiring of the sports facilities has suffered as a consequence of the bad weather and the tennis club has folded. The Council is actively seeking grant funding to update the All Weather Sports Courts but this is a large project. The new cricket practice facility opened during the year and will hopefully encourage more young people to take up the sport.

The Council continues to update and improve play equipment and ensure that safety is the main priority. Some of the equipment in the Toddlers Play Area is due for replacement very shortly. The gym equipment is still proving to be popular with people of all ages.

The Council has been waiting for some time for Chelmsford City Council to dredge and repair the ponds in Noakes Place and it is hoped that this work will be carried out in the new financial year.

The Great Baddow and Galleywood Environmental Group working with the Grounds Team have continued their work at Luxfield with regular working groups operating through the year.

10. **HIGHWAYS AND AMENITIES**

Cllr Andrew Sosin addressed the meeting and reported that the main concern of the year had been the deletion by the Local Highways Panel of all the highways schemes put forward by the Parish Council, with the exception of two bus stop improvement schemes in Rothmans Avenue.

The Parish Council was consulted about modified speed limits and parking restrictions on Greenland Gardens. The Council has installed a new village sign, which was designed and manufactured by Dan Rawlings, a local resident. The Council has also made progress with the installation of extra litter and dog waste bins.

Essex County Council has installed new signage at the Army and Navy roundabout and a road widening scheme in the Parkway has been started. This is due to last 15 months to March 2015. Essex County Council had begun the night time street lighting switch off in September 2013. The Council had asked for exemptions for local walkways and these are now going to be checked.

A number of developer funded highways improvements were expected during the year, but very few of these have happened. Essex County Council has deferred several funded highways improvements including the reconstruction and drainage work in Jeffrey Road and Crescent Road to 2014/2015 and the replacement of verges in Loftin Way/Gloucester Avenue to the far future. The new speed limit in Galleywood Road/Watchhouse Road has been implemented and thanks are given to the County Councillor Jenny Chandler for following this up.

The new South Essex Parking Board led by Chelmsford City Council has set out a procedure for new schemes to be considered. New play equipment has been installed by the City Council in Meadgate and this is to be followed by goal posts later this year.

The Parish Council has limited powers to act and a very limited budget but will continue to report and monitor potholes, defective street lights and overhanging vegetation. Parishioners are encouraged to report any problems they find to the Parish Council or directly to Essex County Council Highways. Thanks were given to the Parish Council litter pickers, Don Hood and Mike Passfield, who keep the parish cleaner than it would otherwise be.

Parishioners' Questions and Comments

- 10.1 What is the correct procedure to get a bus shelter?
The question was about the bus shelter in Beehive Lane that had been knocked down by a bus. The Parish Council could not replace it because this was to be done under a S106 agreement that was part of the new development in the area.
- 10.2 The verge in Sandford Mill Lane has been dug out and concreted over. Does the Council know who this land belongs to?
The Council is not aware of the owner of the land.
- 10.3 The speed limit in Maldon Road has been reduced from 40mph to 30mph. Cllr Mrs C Shaw said that it was difficult to do speed checks in this area due to standard of the lighting.
- 10.4 Why is there a sign on the bypass about the Park and Ride?
It is there to remind people about the facility.
- 10.5 There has been another head-on collision on the flyover and something should be done as a matter of urgency. The flashing lights that were present when the road works were in place were useful. Unfortunately, the use of these are not allowed on a permanent basis under Highways Agency rules.

11. **PLANNING**

Cllr Mrs Diana Ronaldson addressed the meeting and said that the Planning Committee meets every two weeks and residents are welcome to attend the meetings. Planning applications are viewed on the website or from hard copies displayed at the meetings and are discussed and comments are sent to Chelmsford City Council. During the past year 135 applications have been discussed. Many of these are for extensions to existing dwellings and some for infill development.

Pitt Place has been sensitively restored after many years of being in disrepair and is now an enhancement to the village entrance. There is also a small new development in Church Street, which fits in very well with the character of the area.

Applications for work on trees with Tree Preservation Orders also come under the Planning Committee and it is important to protect these trees by managing them correctly. The Tree Warden will give his opinion and the committee will often ask for the Arboriculturalist to give advice. Trees are precious to the village and must be managed and protected.

The Village Design Statement states that villagers want to keep the character of the village and the Council supports this wherever possible. The Village Design Statement can be viewed on both the Parish Council and City Council websites.

Thanks were given to Michele Dixon and Ann Wood, who prepare the agendas and material, attend the meetings and liaise with the officers at the City Council.

12. **PARISH HALL AND BELL CENTRE**

Cllr Mrs Veronica Sadowsky had given her apologies to the meeting and said that she did not have anything further to add to the main report.

13. **FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

Cllr Mrs Christine Shaw addressed the meeting. There has been a settled year and thanks are given to the office staff for their hard work, Ann Wood, Elaine Bryan and Michele Dixon.

The last year saw the resignation of Peter Charman, who has secured a post working in Europe and has found it impractical to continue as a councillor. The Council is very grateful to him for his work. The Council is pleased to welcome Jonathan Fuller, who has been co-opted to fill the vacancy.

The Essex On Tour scheme is still a casualty of the austerity measures and there was no performance this year. It is now considered unlikely that this scheme will resume. There was a book festival event with an afternoon of slides, a talk and poetry from World War One.

Thanks go to Mike Humphrey, other YMCA staff and volunteers who do such a good job of running the drop-in centre in Marrable House and the youth club at the Bell Centre. All these sessions are proving highly successful and are contributing to the absence of youth nuisance in Great Baddow.

Thanks go to John Emery, the Editor of the Great Baddow Times for his hard work co-ordinating all the contributions received and editing the magazine. The Council is continuing to look at the distribution methods as complaints are still being received about non-delivery. Copies are available in the library and the Parish Council office and on the website. Residents were requested to let the office know if their copies are not delivered. The magazine is published in March, June, September and December. The magazine is one of the most popular of the Council's initiatives.

Ideas and comments are always welcome and the Council's aim is always to try and enhance facilities for the village and make Great Baddow a welcoming and enjoyable place to live.

There are public sessions at all meetings and residents can also approach the office and councillors.

13. **PARISH COUNCIL FINANCES**

The Clerk reported that the accounts close on 31st March each year and are audited by an external auditor. The audited accounts are then made available for public inspection. The date set for audit is 9th June 2014 and anyone who is interested has the right to inspect the accounts between 9th May 2014 and 6th June 2014. The un-audited Receipts and Payment figures were circulated to those present. It was noted that the balances include ring fenced S106 monies and ring fenced project monies and therefore, the general reserve available is less than the figure shown. The Clerk also explained that this year the Parish Council has been able to find a slightly higher rate interest account, in which to keep its reserves.

14. **ART PROJECT – A SENSE OF PLACE**

Cllr Mrs Jannetta Sosin told the meeting that some S106 monies were received as part of the development in Eastwood Park, which was specifically to create an art project for the village. Chelmsford City Council commissioned Furtherfield (a not-for-profits art company) to work with two Chelmsford based artists. They were given a wide brief to create something that was accessible and a lasting legacy. The starting point was a historical banner that belongs to the Great Baddow WI and the artists were asked to work with young people and older members of the community. The result will be a photography exhibition on 22nd and 23rd August 2014 based on photowalks and workshops.

One of the artists involved said that the first photowalk had produced some lovely results and a selection process from the photos that have been sent in was due to start shortly. Further work with the youth group will be happening soon and there will be another photowalk organised.

15. **GREAT BADDOW PAROCHIAL CHARITIES**

The Clerk of the Parochial Charities Glenn Finch, gave the report on behalf of the Chairman John Shaw. The Trustees had met on 5 occasions during the year for the routine administration of the Charities' business, including the upkeep of ten almshouses. There were no almshouse vacancies during the year. Charitable donations derived from interest on investments, were made to the vicars of Great Baddow and Galleywood for the relief of the needy of the parishes and for the Sunday schools. Each resident had been presented with Christmas gifts.

In addition to the normal maintenance during the year, two new heating systems were installed at St Mary's Court, so now all the bungalows have new boilers and radiators. At Kinghams, the rear entrance has been made wheelchair accessible and new loft insulation has been fitted.

A S106 application was submitted to Chelmsford City Council for new kitchens at St Mary's Court. The application was successful and work will start shortly. The windows at Kinghams urgently need replacing but because the building is in the conservation area, the City Council is refusing to allow UPVC windows. Negotiations are ongoing.

In October, the Chairman and Clerk attended a national Almshouse Association course in Cheltenham, for update in legislation and good practice.

Essex Fire and Rescue Service inspected the properties to offer advice to residents on safety in the home and check that the alarms that were fitted in 2008 were still in place and working. Their advice is greatly appreciated.

During the year, a review of the investments took place and a budget was set for 2014.

16. **GREAT BADDOW ARTS AND LEISURE CENTRE**

David Saddington had given his apologies to the meeting and no report had been received.

17. **GREAT BADDOW COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION**

Richard Beck, the Chairman of the Association, gave a report on behalf of the Association. The last two years has seen a downturn in business everywhere and the Association has experienced this as well.

There are currently about 1000 members, which is a reduction from two years ago, when it was about 1500-1600. The finances of the Association are in good shape in spite of the increased running costs and reduction in income. The Association now has a website with information about fees and facilities and also the "Baddow Blog". The running of the Millennium Centre is overseen by a committee, to which the manager reports. The Association turns over approximately £300,000.00 per annum and employs 15 staff, both full and part time.

Usage of the building is still good with room hiring very busy. The Association also provides meeting rooms to some village groups. The number of function hires has fallen and bar takings are less. The restaurant has stayed fairly busy, particularly over Christmas. The Association has run its usual programme of events and has also supported other village events. There is a continuous maintenance programme, although with the centre having been built in 2000, the maintenance costs are now increasing.

The staff at the Millennium Centre continue to be a major factor in running the building to the high standard that is necessary. Steps have been taken to recruit younger members onto the committee and there has been some success in this. The committee will continue to encourage them.

The success of the Association is helped by the continued support of the Parish Council with whom there are regular meetings. Both organisations work to ensure that Great Baddow is well served by the Community Association.

Parishioner's Questions and Comments

17.1 How was the beer festival advertised?

There were posters displayed and it was on the website. Also, CAMRA members and Community Association members were notified.

18. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Cllr Mrs Jannetta Sosin thanked all the organisations for attending and giving their reports. She also thanked Cllr Mrs Chris Shaw, all other members of the parish Council and the staff.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.20 pm, with the Chairman thanking those in attendance for coming.

Signed: Dated:.....
Chairman of the Parish Council