

**THE 121<sup>st</sup> VILLAGE CONFERENCE HELD AT THE  
BELL CENTRE, GREAT BADDOW ON THURSDAY 16<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2015**

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.

The business meeting of the Village Conference then started at 7.43pm.

1. **PRESENT**

Councillor Mrs Jannetta Sosin (Chairman of the Parish Council) presided over the meeting, which numbered 8 members of the public and 12 parish councillors. The members of the public included Cllr Jenny Chandler (Essex County Council and Chelmsford City Council councillor), 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), Richard Beck (Chairman of the Great Baddow Community Association), Terry Hull (Allotments Representative for Towerfield site) and John Emery (Editor of the Great Baddow Times)

2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were apologies for absence from Essex Police and the Essex Fire and Rescue Service.

3. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the previous Village Conference held on 10<sup>th</sup> April 2014, which had been circulated, were taken as read, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true record of the meeting. Proposed by Cllr Jannetta Sosin and seconded by Cllr Andrew Sosin.

4. **MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising.

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

The Essex Police had notified the Clerk that there were no officers available to attend the conference and there was no written report submitted.

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. There are a few parts of Great Baddow where the Neighbourhood Watch is still active but due to the recent death of one co-ordinator, fewer people than before are receiving the newsletter.

Mr Glading does not wish to resign precipitately but would like to do so as soon as someone can be found to take over. He would continue to work alongside that person. He has made several attempts to find someone but without success. Mr Glading was told that if he wanted to send an article for the Great Baddow Times this could be published.

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.

7. **REPORT FROM THE FIRE SERVICE**

Station Commander Doug Sylvester had given his apologies to the meeting and the Clerk read out a short report. The Essex Fire & Rescue Service is committed to driving down the number of emergency calls across the county. The thinking behind this is that prevention is better than cure. To this end,

crews have been dedicating more time towards interacting with the community and trying to identify areas where positive, early intervention could make a difference. The service has a Targeted Intervention initiative, which tries to reach the sections of the community who sometimes get overlooked. The crews give fire safety advice and provide free smoke alarms.

In addition to this, the Great Baddow Station has recently become the main centre for Duke of Edinburgh and Firebreak training courses. These courses have been growing over the last two years and are set to expand even further.

Personnel based at Great Baddow continue to provide local fire cover and have a specialist role as a Large Animal Rescue Team, which covers the whole county. The Fire Service like all public services is facing hard financial decisions in the next few years but it guarantees to continue to provide a first class emergency service and to work towards improved community safety.

8. **PARISH COUNCIL REPORT**

A detailed written report had been circulated to all those present providing details of the Council's activities during the 2014/2015 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, despite a reduced workforce for a substantial part of the year due to ill health.

She reported the death of Clive Arben, the representative for the Vicarage Lane allotment site. Although he had not been in the job long, his contributions to the meetings will be missed. The search for a new representative is underway. Terry Hull continues to make an excellent contribution as the representative for the Towerfield allotment site.

There are vacancies on both sites and no waiting list. Thanks were given to the Administrative Assistant Michele Dixon, who regularly monitors the allotments and helps to ensure that the plots are well managed and maintained.

The decline in use of the sports facilities has continued, which is a concern that the Council needs to address. Over the next few months, the Council will explore ways to improve some of the facilities. The decline is not a reflection on the quality of the grass sports surfaces, which have again received external recognition for their standard. Work has recently been carried out on the hard surface tennis courts to repair various areas.

The outdoor gym and play equipment continues to be very popular and this year, the last piece of equipment in a rolling refurbishment plan in the Toddlers Play Area has been installed.

Chelmsford City Council has at last started the dredging and refurbishment works to the ponds and although it is currently quite messy, the contractor will leave the area in good order, once the work is completed.

There has been concern for a while about the fencing along the driveway into the Recreation Ground from the Groundsmen's office to the Community Association building and also the damage caused by vehicles parking and driving onto Noakes Place. The Council has arranged for Chelmsford City Council to install wooden bollards and drop bollards to limit access and an installation date is awaited.

The Environmental Group working with the Grounds Team has continued their work at Luxfield with regular working groups operating through the year. The Council thanks the group for its continued work in this area.

The Council is pleased to receive many compliments about the Lawn Cemetery and the Grounds Staff work hard to maintain the high standard.

10. **HIGHWAYS AND AMENITIES**

Cllr Andrew Sosin addressed the meeting and reported that potholes in many locations have been reported throughout the year. Unfortunately, Highways Officers view potholes in residential roads as a low priority.

Essex County Council has implemented a 20mph speed limit in Greenland Gardens and 5mph limit in Ruby Link. The Parish Council has supported a request for directional signage to Baddow Hospital.

The Parish Council has supported residents' complaints about the withdrawal of the 31 bus service from Great Baddow to Maldon. The replacement is the 31X that goes along the bypass.

Essex County Council has completed the inbound road widening in Parkway and the outbound widening has been much quicker. The County Council began the night time lights switch-off in September 2013 and following county-wide complaints, changed the switch-off time from 12 midnight to 1.00am. The Parish Council asked for various local walkways to be exempted, which were at first but these now seem to be disappearing.

The Parish Council has arranged for the installation of replacement dog waste bins in Church Walk and Bells Chase. A replacement seat was also installed in Galleywood Road, near the junction with Plumtree Avenue.

The Council has also agreed to the installation of a bus shelter in Galleywood Road near the junction with Bells Chase and the replacement of the bus shelter in Tabors Hill.

An extended parking and loading restriction was requested in Gilmore Way/Molrams Lane near to the school but the request was not supported by the South Essex Parking Partnership.

Great Baddow High Street was re-surfaced again last year and Galleywood Road and part of Dorset Avenue were surface dressed.

Speeding is a matter of concern in a number of roads in Great Baddow and this has been addressed at the NAP meetings. The police no longer attend these meetings but are sent the minutes. Residents can meet with PCSOs in the shopping areas from time to time and the timings can be viewed on the police website.

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 2015/2016 and the replacement of verges in Loftin Way/Gloucester Avenue to the far future. The footways in Gilmore Way and surrounding roads were marked up for utilities for replacement but the work has been deferred as it was too expensive to fund in the 2014/15 year. Cllr Jenny Chandler has been chasing the MASC developer funded improvements on a regular basis.

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. The Council makes comments and representations to the Highways Agency, Essex County Council and Chelmsford City Council. 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 A resident from Galleywood Road said that he had sent a letter to Essex County Council about the kerbside drain flooding in Galleywood Road, due to a blocked main drain. The reply had been that there was an acceptable rate of drainage the area. The resident felt that this was not acceptable and that the County Council should do something about the situation as soon as possible. A copy of the letter sent to the Parish Council may have been misplaced and the resident was asked to re-submit it.

### 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 144 applications have been discussed. Many of these are for extensions to existing dwellings and some for infill development.

The Parish Council was very concerned about the development of the Bringey Cottage and presented objections to the planning committee at the City Council. The Bringey footpath is regularly used throughout the day by young and old and it was felt that by granting permission, the City Council has reduced the safety of the path.

There has been a recent reduction in the car parking available at The Vineyards. The owners of the building have appealed to the Planning Inspectorate against a decision made and this now takes the matter out of the hands of the City Council.

Tree Preservation Orders and applications thereon also come under the Planning Committee and it is important to protect these trees by managing them correctly. Trees are precious to the village, as we have many that are extremely old.

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 thanked the staff for their hard work during the year. In the next year new flooring will be laid and the outside re-decoration will be undertaken. Preliminary work has taken place on a feasibility study for the rebuilding/refurbishment of the Bell Centre and negotiations with Essex County Council for the lease continue.

### 13. **FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

Cllr Mrs Christine Shaw addressed the meeting. There has been a settled year and particular thanks were given to Elaine Bryan and Michele Dixon for their extra efforts during the Clerk's absence on sick leave.

There has been no change in the councillors during the year but the election is coming up in May. However, the Parish Council seats are uncontested so there will not be an election for the Parish Council.

The Council was not invited to take part in this year's Essex Book Festival but as there has been no contact from the organisers, the Council is unsure why. The events did seem to be concentrated in a smaller number of venues and enquires will be made as to the rationale for the venues before next year.

Continued 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. The future of Marrable House is still undecided but it is not easy to find alternative venues.

Many 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. Thanks are also given to the contributors. The Council continues to look at the distribution methods as there are still pockets where residents report not receiving copies. The deliverers recently undertook a re-organisation, which caused enormous problems with the distribution of the last edition. There are always copies available in the parish office and in the library and it can also be found on the website. Residents are 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.

For many years some councillors and other members of the public have taken part in the Neighbourhood Action Panel meetings. However, recent police reorganisation has resulted in no police attending the meeting and so the communication with them is very distant. However, the group continues to meet and is determined to keep going. If there are problems that residents want raised, the NAP can be contacted through the Parish Council office or directly with the councillors Chris Shaw, Trevor Miller, Maureen Miller or Andrew Sosin.

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.

### 13. **PARISH COUNCIL FINANCES**

The Clerk reported that the accounts close on 31<sup>st</sup> 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 8<sup>th</sup> June 2015 and anyone who is interested has the right to inspect the accounts between 8<sup>th</sup> May 2015 and 5<sup>th</sup> June 2015. The un-audited Receipts and Payment figures were circulated to those present. It was noted that the balances shown 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.

#### Parishioners' Questions and Comments

13.1 A resident asked why the Grounds committee income is so much less than the expenditure. Cllr A Sosin replied that the Grounds committee does not have any real income.

13.2 A resident asked who the auditor is. The Clerk replied that the external auditor is appointed by the Audit Commission and is currently PKF Littlejohn LLP.

15. **GREAT BADDOW PAROCHIAL CHARITIES**

The Chairman of the Parochial Charities John Shaw, gave the report. The Trustees had met on 6 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, three new kitchens were installed at St Mary's Court with the fourth one completed in January 2015, funded by S106 monies from Chelmsford City Council. This updates the kitchens, which were thought to be the originals installed in 1960's. A further application for S106 monies was submitted in November 2014 for replacement kitchens and bathrooms in Kinghams and a further bathroom for St Mary's Court. This has now been approved.

The windows at Kinghams urgently need replacing but because they are in the conservation area, the City Council has previously refused UPVC replacements. However, following negotiations, an acceptable alternative has been found and five of the six flats had the windows replaced in December 2014, with the final one to be done in early 2015.

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

In May, a review of the investments took place and a budget was set for 2014.

In August one of the residents celebrated her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday and by way of celebration, the Great Baddow Community Care Luncheon Club, which she attends, was funded by the Charities on that occasion.

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

There was no one present from the Arts and Leisure Centre 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. There are currently about 1000 members, the majority of whom are senior citizens. The Association has a website and a member runs a "Baddow Blog", which has news about the Association, as well as general news about the village.

The finances of the Association are in good shape in spite of the increased running costs and reduction in income. 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. Contract staff are used for cleaning and maintenance work.

Usage of the building is still good with room hiring very busy. The Association also provides useful meeting rooms to some village groups. The number of function hires have risen recently and bar takings are improving. The restaurant has stayed fairly busy, particularly over Christmas. The Association has run its usual programme of events, including theatre trips and has also supported other village events. A Beer Festival will be running in May 2015. There is a continuous maintenance programme, although with the centre having been built in 2000, the maintenance costs are now increasing. Air conditioning has recently been installed that can also be used as heating, which is an improvement on the previous system.

There have been several major staff changes with a new Centre Manager and Cook and an office manager has been appointed to oversee the accounts and other administrative tasks. As a result of the changes, the Centre now serves tea and coffee during the morning to all, not just to members. The staff at the Millennium Centre continue to be a major factor in running the building to the high standard that is necessary. The building is always clean and given the high usage, this is not an easy task

The Association is concerned about the decrease of Neighbourhood Policing and it is hoped that the previous problems with vandalism will not re-appear.

Although there has been a reduction in income, the finances are healthy and the reserves have only dropped slightly. 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. Looking to the future, the Association is making changes to ensure that employees run the building with only executive decisions being made by the Committee, as in the modern world, very few younger people are coming through as volunteers.

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.

18. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The meeting was asked what was happening at the ponds in Noakes Place. Cllr Mrs Sue Young said that they are being dredged and the walls are being reinforced.

Cllr Mrs Jannetta Sosin reminded the meeting that the Council's new website is now live and that there is a lot more information on it than before.

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 8.59 pm, with the Chairman thanking those in attendance for coming.

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