

Chairman's Report 2020/21

This year has been a very difficult one for all of us but especially for those who have lost loved ones.

The Parish Council has continued its work without interruption, but meetings have been held online using Zoom and we have had members of the public logging on as welcome participants. We have seen a few changes within the team, welcoming Mark Hagger as a new councillor, and also welcoming a new litter picker to the team enabling the Parish Council to continue to provide litter picking for 7 days a week. I would like to thank those who gave up their time freely to assist with decision making to ensure Great Notley and White Court remain a well-regarded and happy place to live and work.

Some of the main points that we have delivered on in the 2020/2021 civic year are summarised below:

- The Parish Council continues to provide 70 hours a week litter picking to keep Parish clean and tidy but has, at times, to increase these hours because of the large increase in rubbish being deposited during lockdowns. In addition, the PC has purchased new litter bins and updated the map boards.
- We have almost completed the refurbishment of the play area at the RAFT having raised a large amount of grant funding towards the project and concluding the lease of land from BDC. It is hoped to reopen by mid-April
- We continue to maintain the Levens Way play area which is open once again after closures because of safety issues caused by the pandemic
- The North Essex Parking Partnership have been helpful in tackling the issue of inconsiderate and illegal parking within the village, but we await the decisions on requests for a 20-mph speed limit in White Court and a speed survey on London Road. We continue to liaise with the Country Park regarding overspill parking onto village, and with schools to assist them in the challenge of parking at school run times. BDC are soon to place bollards by Panners Bridge to stop unwary pedestrians crossing and encourage their use of the footpaths around it.
- Our newly formed Health and wellbeing working group has been busy liaising with the GPs surgery, the volunteer hub at the Church, and the Community Association. It has also produced a leaflet circulated by councillors and volunteers to all homes. This set out the help available from volunteers at the Church and the Social prescriber at the surgery.
- The Council also agreed to purchase mobile phones to be lent to the Church hub in order to help with communication at this difficult time.
- The provision of allotments moves slowly but the Clerk has been in touch with The National Allotment Society who are pleased to offer any help that is necessary
- Having been unable to hold a Remembrance Service this year we were grateful to the WI who decorated the village sign beautifully in an act of remembrance. They will do something similar at Easter and we are very grateful to them.
- Similarly, the Torchlight Procession was not possible, and we are to review our future Christmas activities

- Communication with residents using the Great Notley Times magazine, the website and Facebook page as well as getting information out quickly has been very important this year. This has been ably done by the Clerk, Suzanne Walker, who is quick to respond to queries from residents and ever mindful of all information they will find useful
- The Strategy concerning trees in the parish, especially along Great Notley Avenue, is on hold because of the pandemic but will be addressed as soon as is possible with Braintree District Council who are responsible for tree management in the Parish.

We will continue to represent the Parish with sound approaches to Essex County Council, Braintree District Council and other statutory bodies when we have concerns or issues that require a collaborative approach to overcome.

Parish Council Tax increases of a small amount will be applied from April. In the instance of a band D property this equates to an increase of £1.70 per year or 3 pence per week.

The reason for the increase is to cover increased staff costs in view of the increase in the minimum wage and to ensure that the village remains clean and tidy in accordance with expectations of residents.

I would like to thank my Vice Chairman Frankie Ricci for his support over the past few months, along with my fellow Parish councillors, the litter picking team and the Parish Clerk.