**OAKLEY ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2015**

Minutes of meeting held on 7th April 2015 in the Village Hall, Oakley.

**PRESENT:**

Cllr Phillips (Chair), 7 Parish Councillors, the Clerk to the Parish Council, Ms. Smith (Castele Consultancy Ltd), Mr. Edwards (Lincroft School) and 7 members of the public.

**1. Apologies:**

Cllrs. Taylor, Walker & White

**2. Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting held on 1st April 2014:**

Copies of the minutes of the last meeting were circulated and there were no matters arising.

**3. Presentation by Castele Consultancy Ltd. on Proposed 3G Pitch for Lincroft School:**

Ms. Smith outlined the proposal for a full-sized, floodlit, 3G pitch at Lincroft School in conjunction with the Football Foundation and a copy of her presentation is appended to the minutes. Bedford BC Playing Pitch Strategy consultation had highlighted a lack of training pitches in the Borough and Bedfordshire FA had approached Lincroft as a potential site. Technical consultants were being used to design the detailed project and submit the planning application, which was expected to be sent to Bedford BC in 6 – 8 weeks. The pitch, which could be used for rugby & hockey training, rounders and fitness training, as well as football, would cost £550K - £600K and the Football Foundation would provide 50% of the funds, appoint the contractor and oversee the build. The pitch would then open in early 2016. As a Football Foundation site certain criteria had to be met and over 50s and disabled sports programmes would be included in the Development Plan. Residents and councillors were concerned about the lighting, parking (given that 40 – 200 players could be using the pitch each day outside of school hours), supervision, impact on existing facilities at the ORA and availability for residents. Ms. Smith advised that lighting would be directed down onto the pitch and had not caused problems in other locations. Parking was a challenge and would need to be managed by the Football Development Group. There would be a slight increase in parking on site and “Club nights” would help reduce the number of vehicles but she would highlight the concerns about parking to the technical consultants. The site would not be left unsupervised. Extra staff, a development officer or a caretaker would be appointed, if necessary and paid for from the pitch hire fees. The site was not expected to adversely affect the ORA site as it would mostly be used for training. During bad weather the pitches at the ORA were water-logged and unplayable and an all weather pitch might assist. Lincroft School accepted that parking was an issue for residents and booking the site and existing facilities to clubs prevented residents using them on an individual basis. They would try and address these problems. Councillors also asked about changing facilities and sponsorship and were advised that the existing changing rooms were suitable but grants could be applied for in the future to upgrade. Sponsorship could only be sought for the capital cost of the pitch so there would be no commercial signs on the pitch, only Football Foundation and partner club logos. Partner clubs would be able to sell refreshments to players but would not be using outside catering firms. Chair thanked Ms. Smith & Mr. Edwards for attending. Mr. Edwards thanked the Council for the monies for the cricket nets and noted that Oakley students were completing the Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire.

**4.** **Report of the Parish Council:**

**a) Chairman’s Report**

It seems no time since our year began with our Annual General Meeting in May 2014 and the following 11 months have proved to be very busy indeed. I would like to express at the outset, my appreciation for the support and commitment of each and every member of the Parish Council, Councillors and Clerk. I would also like, on the residents’ and Council’s behalf, to thank Jane Walker for her commitment over a period of 12 years as Chair of the Council and to John Saunders for his commitment and selfless sacrifice to the Council for a period of 50 years. This will be John’s last meeting as a Parish Councillor because he has decided to hang his minutes up.

Hartop Railway Bridge was one of the first subjects to be discussed following various meetings. The work started on 21 July 2014 and finished quite recently.

Following a very productive discussion with residents at the Parish Meeting on 1 April last year the Council resolved on 6 May 2014 that at least two pairs of Average Speed Cameras be installed in Oakley at appropriate locations, which would be data led and that Oakley Parish Council contribute the cost of one pair, totalling £60,000, with a matching amount paid by Bedford Borough. Enhanced lighting and installation of Cameras commenced on 23 February and it will be noted that there are more than two pairs. We hope they will be operational quite soon. Traffic flows through the village continue to create frustration, but maybe the end is in sight, as the link road from Biddenham to Sainsbury’s roundabout has been started. Ultimately will this relieve Oakley of the through traffic? Who knows!

We decided that we should encourage residents to clear grass from footways outside their houses where possible which was done by many and in addition the Parish Council has financed grass to be trimmed around our focal point, the Village Green.

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The allotments still look good and although the Parish Council continued to put some finance into them, the allotment holders do help themselves in the main. A contribution was made towards the improvement of the Willow Vale track, which will help allotment and Linch Furlong users.

The new bus shelter that was installed in Station Road was moved to Church Lane following comments from users and its replacement turned the other way round providing protection from those bitter easterly winds.

Council is proud of the Children’s Playground and its equipment on the Green and we are committed to ensuring it remains safe and suitable.

The Oakley Village Plan has stood the test of time and a Neighbourhood Development Plan sub group has been set up, comprising Parish Councillors, our Borough Councillor and residents with both interest and expertise. There was a very successful launch on 3 and 4 October last year when residents were invited to attend and make their comments. Much work has been done so far, with more to follow. This work is invaluable and will shape and secure our villages future.

Financial support continues to be given to worthy groups in the village who make application and are seen to be making a contribution to their needs as well.

The Oakley Village Directory continues to be an invaluable document for most houses. Not only is it valued by many, but, thanks to sponsorship and advertisements, it provides a very useful source of finance for the village. To date over 7 years it has raised over £10,000 and we are indebted to Sara Fardon and her team for this success. The quarterly Newsletter continues to be an excellent way of communication to residents. We thank all who contribute and the editor Bill Chalker for his efforts in presenting such a readable publication. The village website is also regularly used and its usage is increasing.

There was a very successful Litter Pick last year when some litter was found, though not vast amounts, which is testament to the work of the regular litter picker Mr Hobbs. This year’s Litter Pick took place on 7 March and was reasonably well supported. A dozen or so bags of litter collected and exchanged for chocolate Easter Eggs.

In June we saw some minor problems at the Youth Club, but I am glad to report that they were short lived and the club is now flourishing with a new local leader.

Sadly we lost our Drop in Clinic despite work to try to retain or replace it.

Safety is high on our priority list and firstly we purchased and distributed No Cold Calling Stickers. Then, following complaints and concerns about safety caused by indiscriminate parking close to the junction of High Street/Reynes Drive, it was agreed that the only way to deal with the problem was to have double yellow lines put down around and opposite the junction, but no further, thereby making it abundantly clear that parking on that junction is forbidden. The existence of No Waiting lines enables the Borough Parking van to enforce. Hopefully these lines will appear any time soon. It is indeed sad that we have to go to these lengths, but trust me we do, some of the parking at this junction has to be seen to be believed.  
At the appropriate time look out for poppies in the Riverside Meadow. Oakley WI asked if they could plant seeds and they should be flowering this summer.

Oakley Motor Cycle Club, which is part of Oakley Sports and Social Club organised a Motor Cycle Festival, which they intend holding biannually. The event was very well attended but a few complaints were made to the Parish Council, mainly associated with band noise during the afternoon and evening rather than motor cycle noise. Whilst the complaints were discussed at the following Parish Council meeting, all complainants received written explanations from the Motor Cycle Club itself, and they have now drawn up guidelines for members to adhere to concerning consideration for residents.

Nine bus stops around the village have been upgraded with raised boarding points to assist passengers. The dropped kerb at one of the stops in the High Street near Reynes Drive has been lost during these works and it is hoped that it can be re-established at some point.

Drone Cameras raised their ugly heads in mid-summer and complaints were made about their use. Two residents were spoken to quite speedily by Councillors and to date there have been no further problems.

The trees that were planted in the green area in Parsonage Close by the developer came to the end of their useful life. They have been replaced by the Parish Council with three rowans.

Earlier in the year Councillors held discussions with the Church Council at St Mary’s and as a result an electrical connection was installed and a permanent Christmas Tree was planted in the churchyard. The tree lights at the Church were officially switched on on Saturday 6 December. It was a cold, crisp, dry evening, when many residents attended in good voice. A couple of carols were sung around the tree and then we processed into Church for many more carols, mulled wine and lots of other refreshments, thanks to Reverend Linda and Reverend Gill and their generous band of helpers.

With the co-operation of the Village Hall Management Committee, the Parish Council decided to have a defibrillator installed outside the Village Hall. It is now there should it ever be needed, but we hope it never will.

We are in the process of establishing a Photograph/Document Archive at the Old School. It makes sense to have all of this material in one place and that the archive can be accessible to all.

Crime over the year has been on a par with previous years but we must never be complacent. Everyone should be encouraged to report unlawful/criminal matters to the Police and we should never adopt the view that someone else has reported it or ‘I won’t report it because ‘’THEY’’ won’t be interested.’

The bottle bank over the years has been an excellent resource and has helped boost much needed income. I implore residents to use it, but please don’t abuse it. If it is full, then take your bottles away and don’t leave them around the bottle bank for someone else to clear.

Chair thanked residents for their patience and attention and there were no questions.

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**b) Parish Precept 2015/16:**

The Borough Council had again agreed to compensate Parish Councils whose tax base was reduced in 2012/13 and would pay a top up grant of £1,544 in 2015/16. The precept had been set at £49,856 and the Borough grant would raise funds to £51,400. The band D rate had therefore increased by 1.87% to £52.26.

**c) Draft Accounts for 2014/2015:**

In 2014/15 income amounted to £67,349.94 and expenditure to £65,316.17. Income decreased by approximately £11,800 largely because of a developer payment of £12,744 for sport and leisure facilities in 2013/14 and a reduction in interest payments of £5,200 in 2014/15, offset by a grant for the Neighbourhood Plan of £6,300.

Expenditure increased by approximately £10,000. During 2014/15 £6,945, the remaining part of the developer contribution received in 2013/14, was paid to Lincroft School for their new cricket nets and an additional £2,333 was given in grants to local organisations, Oakley AFC, the Day Centre, The Old School, Oakley Scouts, the Youth Club and the RBL for a poppy wreath. Also, £1,598 was spent on the Neighbourhood Plan, £973 was paid in legal fees for the transfer of the open spaces in The Furlong to the Parish Council and an additional £810 was spent on grounds maintenance for tree works and edging the grass around the Green. This was offset by a reduction of approximately £4,000 in capital expenditure because of the cost of the boule pitch in 2013/14.

**d) Planning**

During 2014/15 the Parish Council was consulted on and commented on a total of 33 planning and related applications, compared to 32 in 2013/14. Most were for relatively minor works or tree works and Council objected to only 3 applications on the grounds of overdevelopment, impact on the environment and the height of fencing.

As the Chair had mentioned, the Parish Council and interested residents had continued work on the Neighbourhood Development Plan for the village, which would identify what, if any, housing and business development was needed and where it should be sited and would consider infrastructure, village facilities, open spaces and protection of historic buildings. Residents have had the opportunity to give their views at the Launch Event in October and in the questionnaires in the recent Newsletter and these, along with work on landscape, transport, housing design and amenities will help determine the policies in the Plan. A new NDP website had been set up at [www.ndp.oakleyvillage.co.uk](http://www.ndp.oakleyvillage.co.uk) where details of the work already carried out could be found. Further consultations would be issued later in the year and details would be posted on notice boards, in the Newsletter and on the website.

Cllr. Olney thanked the Clerk for her work for the NDP Group.

**5. Questions from the Floor:**

A member of the Village Hall Committee noted that an election husting had been arranged in the Village Hall on 21.04.15. and invited everyone present to attend to discuss local issues.

Chair then made a presentation to Cllr. John Saunders, in recognition of his work as a councillor and passed on Council’s best wishes for the future. Cllr. Saunders thanked the Council for the gift.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

Chairman