**OAKLEY ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2016**

Minutes of meeting held on 5th April 2016 in the Village Hall, Oakley.

**PRESENT:**

Cllr Phillips (Chair), 8 Parish Councillors, the Clerk to the Parish Council and 20 members of the public.

**1. Apologies:**

Cllrs. Fardon & Taylor

**2. Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting held on 7th April 2015:**

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

**3. Update on Average Speed Cameras:**

Chair commented that the process to install the cameras had taken longer than expected but all the equipment and signs were now in place and the power connected. Responsibility for the system had transferred to Bedford BC w.e.f 1st April 2016 and once Siemens had validated & commissioned the Church Lane, Lovell Road & Pavenham Road sites and the police had carried out their checks the whole system would be live. Some of the delays had proved beneficial, enabling the Lovell Road camera to be moved and as a result the overall scheme was better.

Statistics from the Station Road cameras showed that in October 2015 there were 31 observable offences, 44 in November, 24 in December, 9 in January 2016 and 6 in February, so speeding was decreasing. Council would publish statistics from the other sites once these were available. In response to a resident, Cllr. Olney advised that warnings were given on first offences and enforcement action taken for repeat offences.

**4.** **Results of Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire:**

Full details were available on the website [www.ndp.oakleyvillage.co.uk](http://www.ndp.oakleyvillage.co.uk) and a paper copy would be placed in the Post Office. Cllr. Olney presented the conclusions to the meeting:

* Oakley should receive some housing development (between 20 - 50 homes) over the next 15 years
* These homes should be dispersed across a number of individual homes through the conversion of redundant or derelict buildings or small development (up to 10 homes) on the edge of the village, with an emphasis on infill and brownfield sites
* Most of the homes should be 1-2 bedroom starter homes/homes for older people. Some allocation should be made for 2-3 bedroom family home and bungalows for older people (an alternative to the latter would be houses built to Lifetime Homes criteria).
* Most homes should be offered for sale on the open market, with the addition of some affordable properties (for rental and shared ownership). Provision of some of these affordable properties specifically for local people could be made through a rural exception site development.
* The protection of areas of the village including College Farm, St Marys Church, The Twin Bridges, The Sports Field and the Village Hall is a high priority.
* Any further development should seek to address concerns over traffic congestion and parking in the village and also provide adequate supporting community facilities such as school places, road improvements and water and sewage considerations.
* The overall village and rural feel of Oakley must be protected, along with existing character.
* Broadband speeds are also an issue for a significant minority of residents/businesses

A separate questionnaire was made available online for residents aged 18 and under to complete. 9 responses were received to this questionnaire.

* Most popular responses on what young people liked about living in Oakley, included the green spaces, the social club and the community (people). Suggestions on what could be improved included, provision of affordable housing and improved play and sporting equipment.
* 100% of respondent said that they would like to remain living in Oakley in the future.
* 62.5% of respondents felt that 100 to 150 units would be the most suitable level of new housing that Oakley should take over the period of the Neighbourhood Plan. This is in line with the current suggestion from Bedford Borough Council but far in excess of the number suggested by respondents to the main questionnaire. Starter homes and 2-3 bed homes were put forward as the preferred type of housing.
* A 3G surface pitch was the most popular suggestion for additional leisure or sport facilities needed.
* Overwhelmingly 100% of respondents felt that there was no need for any new shops or business in the village.

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Cllr. Olney thanked residents for completing the questionnaire and advised that the response rate for the main questionnaire was around 30% or 300 completed surveys. A resident was concerned that responses on the 3G pitch could have been skewed by one person or family completing multiple copies. Cllr. Olney agreed that this was possible but could be the case for any of the questions.

**5. Discussion of Drawings for new Village Sign Panels:**

Council was proposing to replace the panels in the stone signs and drawings by Mr. Olney, Cllr. Taylor & Mr. Youngman, which had been selected by Council, were circulated. It was proposed to include the twin bridges and Church on the Church Lane sign, the Old School & Lovell Homes in Lovell Road, the Bedford Arms & High Street cottages in Pavenham Road and the water pump in Highfield Road. It was hoped to include both colour and black & white drawings but Council was seeking advice from the sign makers. Chair confirmed that the oak leaves and Oakley name would be included on the new panels and residents were content. Chair thanked Cllrs. Frampton, Jones & Olney who were leading the project.

**Report of the Parish Council:**

1. **Chairman’s Report**

In the true tradition of life in the village of Oakley, 2015/16 has been very busy for the Parish Council with much going on. Never does a month go by when subjects such as Police, Highways and Planning matters are not discussed, but in addition to these ongoing matters there have been many other equally important issues to discuss. A year ago we had a presentation on the possibility of a 3G football pitch at Lincroft School in Station Road. Some 6 months later it was discussed again at a public meeting and consultation has recently taken place about it being part of a larger development.

The installation of average speed cameras has been rumbling on for almost 2 years. We are almost there now with the entire scheme being operational from April 2016. Delays have been out of our control, but I would argue that the delays may have benefitted us overall because it has enabled us to modify our original plans.

Safety of all of us is of paramount importance, whether it be discouraging driving/parking on verges or footpaths or parking indiscriminately, and in this respect we await No Waiting restrictions being implemented around the Reynes Drive/High Street junction.

Dog fouling and selfish and thoughtless parking outside our schools continues to be a problem. If anyone has the answers to these problems please let us know.

We are very lucky to have two excellent publications, the Newsletter, which is published quarterly, which is read by many and often eagerly awaited and the Village Directory which continues to raise much needed funds for the village, thanks to our sponsors Old Road Securities. This year some of those monies raised will help fund new village entrance signs.

This year we also piloted our Clerk working from an office at the Old School for 4 hours every Thursday 10am to 2pm. This will be reviewed in May. Like many other things in life, if you do not use it you lose it.

There is an immense amount of talent and energy in this village and I know of four occasions recently when thanks to the generosity of residents with their time we have saved the village considerable amounts of money. Thank you also to those residents who regularly pick up litter in their part of the village, help on the allotments, organise the archive and clear the footpaths and Willow Vale. Over the next few months I would like to clear the footpath that runs from the Church to the Twin Bridges. If anyone is prepared to join me in improving the approach to this part of our village, please get in touch with me.

This last year the Youth Club has had around 10 young people attending and is being managed admirably by our young leaders Courtney and Hannah under the watchful eye of Councillor Sara Fardon. Much is being done to increase the membership of this fabulous fully funded facility. The village play area also remains an important, well used, regularly inspected and maintained facility and the allotments continue to be an important part of the village and are flourishing.

A speed watch scheme was considered again last year but not pursued. It may be considered in the future when the effectiveness of the average speed cameras is known. The increased use of HGV’s in Pavenham Road continues to be monitored and discussed when necessary.

One hundred plus people, adults and children enjoyed the annual Christmas Tree lights switch on at St Mary’s in early December all returning home happily after carol singing and mulled wine (not the children). Unfortunately, the Christmas Tree we planted did not survive but it has now been replaced and once it is large enough we will be able to use it for the lights.

A defibrillator can be found outside the Village Hall and an awareness session on its use took place at the end of May. We hope its use will never be required, but if it is, then instructions with it are clear and concise.

I conclude by mentioning the Oakley Neighbourhood Plan which is a very important piece of work carried out by an extremely hardworking group of Parish Councillors and residents who have volunteered their services and specific skills. As residents we should be grateful for all of the hard work this group is putting in to develop this plan which is progressing well. There remains much to do, but you can be assured that this group and indeed the whole of the Parish Council has the good of this village and indeed its residents as our main priority. Please continue to support future Neighbourhood Plan Meetings, because your views are vital.

Chair thanked residents for their support and attendance and there were no questions.

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**b) Parish Precept 2015617:**

The Borough Council has again agreed to compensate Parish Councils whose tax base was reduced in 2012/13 but at a lower rate of £841 in 2016/17 compared to £1,544 in 2015/16. The precept has therefore been set at £50,689 and the Borough grant will raise funds to £51,530. The band D rate has increased by 1.5% to £53.04.

**c) Draft Accounts for 2015/2016:**

In 2015/16 income amounted to £68,659.57 and expenditure to £61,542.04. Income increased by approximately £1,310 largely as a result of the £1,074 Borough Council Rural Grant paid to the Old School through the Parish Council account. Expenditure decreased by approximately £3,774 as we have yet to be invoiced for the average speed cameras. During 2015/16 capital spending decreased by £4,659 as a new bus shelter was purchased in 2014/15 and the cost of the Christmas lights reduced in 2015/16. In 2014/15 a developer contribution of £6,945 was paid to Lincroft School and this was offset in 2015/16 by an increase in spending of £3,635 on the Neighbourhood Plan, £4,614 on repairs to the play area surfacing and the payment of the Rural Grant to the Old School in 2015/16. Donations totalling £7,557 were made to Oakley AFC, the Day Centre, The Old School, Oakley PCC, the Youth Club and the RBL for a poppy wreath.

**d) Planning**

During 2015/16 the Parish Council was consulted on and commented on a total of 43 planning and related applications, compared to 33 in 2014/15. Most were for relatively minor works or tree works and Council objected to only 4 applications on the grounds of overdevelopment, impact on neighbours and that proposals were out of keeping with neighbouring properties.

The Neighbourhood Plan Group has continued work on a Neighbourhood Development Plan for the village. A questionnaire seeking views on housing, business, facilities, green space, important buildings and infrastructure was circulated to all residents and businesses in November and a summary of the results was discussed earlier. The full analysis of each individual question is on the NDP website. The Group is using this analysis, along with other evidence, to formulate the policies for the Neighbourhood Plan and will be consulting on these policies later this year.

The Sharnbrook Academy Federation recently consulted on moving the Lincroft playing field. The new field, including the 3G pitch, would be located on land directly opposite the school and a new access to the school and car parking would be created. The large majority of responses to the NDP questionnaire did not want the Lincroft playing field developed and the parking, traffic & noise issues raised by residents at the public meeting to discuss a 3G pitch had not been resolved by the proposal so we objected to it. We have however asked the Academy to meet with us to discuss how the needs of the School and residents’ concerns can be met.

The Borough Council issued a second Call for Sites in 2015 and a further 5 sites have been put forward in Oakley - Westfield Lodge (residential), Town Farm (15 – 25 houses), East of Station Road adjacent to the proposed new Lincroft playing field (250 houses), Highfield Road (commercial) and South of Highfield Road (a parkway station). Marcol, the new owners of the Twinwood Business Park and Bedfordia have also submitted a joint proposal for a new settlement at the Business Park, which would include around 6,000 dwellings, offices/shops, a health centre, secondary school, 4 primary schools and a significant amount of green space. The Borough is currently assessing all the sites put forward in 2014 & 2015 and we are waiting to hear if they have selected any of the large sites for development.

**5. Questions from the Floor:**

Resident commented that it was poor planning to have the Oakley 20 race and the rural skip in the village the same day. Chair noted that Council was contacted late the previous week by Bedford BC who were considering cancelling the waste collection. Council was not consulted on the date of the skips or the race and considered it was inappropriate to cancel at such short notice. Saturday would not be affected and Council suggested the skip remain in Dewlands if Reynes Drive was too congested on Sunday. Bedford BC took the decision not to stay in Dewlands. Concern was expressed that the rural skip had not been widely advertised. Clerk noted that details were on the website and all three notice boards. Some residents were concerned about the large number of vehicles parking during the race. Chair commented that although the race caused some inconvenience spectators did use local businesses.

Residents asked about the proposed 3G pitch and development of the existing field. Cllr. Walker noted that the funding previously secured from the FA had lapsed as the pitch would have needed to be operational by September 2016 and confirmed that Academy Schools were eligible for FA funding. If the proposed relocation of the pitch received permission from the Department for Education, the Federation would need to apply for new funding. The land swap was not part of the Call for Sites and the Lincroft Head Teacher had advised that the relocation was not dependent on adjacent housing development. However, the proposed new road would be. Cllr. Olney commented that Council was concerned about the proposal to move the field as the Academy Federation had not followed Education Department guidelines and had therefore requested a meeting with the Federation.

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Council was also concerned about the proposed housing adjacent to the playing field and had written to Bedford BC. Bedford BC had set up a Local Plan Group to consider the Call for Sites and if one or two large sites were taken forward, the number of houses needed in the villages would reduce. It was hoped that decisions would be made by Summer 2016. There would still be some development as the Borough was required to maintain a five-year land bank and the majority of development on large sites would take place towards the end of the Local Plan period. Cllr. Sansom noted that once the number of houses for each village had been decided by the Borough, the NDP Group would decide which sites should be developed according to residents’ views. The final Neighbourhood Plan would then be decided by a village referendum. The NDP Group would be holding another exhibition later this year and hoped that residents would come along and give their views.

A resident thanked Council for their work on behalf of the village and the Chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

 Chairman