

Little Baddow Parish Council

Annual Assembly 2023

The Annual Assembly of the Parish Council was held in The Memorial Hall, North Hill, Little Baddow on Wednesday 10th May 2023 commencing at 7.15pm. The following members of the Council were present:

Chairman: Cllr P Irvine

Councillors: Ms. D. Ginn, Mr. S Scott, Mr. K Sheldrake, and Mrs. Stephanie Scott

Welcome

Chairman Councillor Irvine welcomed Essex County Councillor John Spence and retiring Chelmsford City Councillor Ian Wright and thanked them both for their support over the past year. The Chairman also extended a welcome to newly elected City Councillors Julia Jeapes, Jacob Armstrong, and Steph Scott.

The Chairman thanked all the exhibitors for their displays.

Total attendance was approximately 60 people.

Minutes of the Last Meeting

The Parish Councillors approved the minutes of the last meeting held on 11th May 2022 as a true and fair record of the meeting.

Chairman's Report

The Chairman started his report by drawing residents' attention to the recently distributed Village Newsletter that included many interesting articles on the village and the activities of the Council.

In particular the Chairman spoke to the following points that are of village interest and reflect issues raised by residents:

- **Paper Mill Lock Bridge** – the existing bridge has been saved and parking issues are being addressed by Essex County Council. South Essex Parking Partnership are supporting the deployment of wardens to enforce parking restrictions.
- **Speeding & Speedwatch Group** – speeding is a perennial issue in the village. The Chairman had confirmation from the PFCC, Roger Hirst, that he will take up the issue when there is supporting evidence. Council would welcome more volunteers for the Speedwatch Group to assist in the gathering of evidence to support possible traffic calming measures. A risk assessment request has been lodged with the Local Highways Panel to look at safety on The Ridge.
- **Holybred Wood** – the Parish Council completed acquisition of approximately 2.5 acres of the existing Mushroom Farm site off Holybread Lane to add to the existing Holybred Wood. This was a gift to the village from The Fairfax Gospel Hall Trust.
- **History Centre** – Council has been working with the local United Reformed Church to secure the long-term tenancy for the History Centre on the URC land. The central

URC Synod has offered a 125-year lease which is now with Council solicitors to finalise details.

- **Land at Fir Tree Lane** – there is a 25-acre parcel of land for sale at the end of Fir Tree Lane and first refusal has been given to the Council. In order to purchase the site for approximately £350,000 a Working Group has been established with residents and councillors to raise funds. There has been a good start, with pledges to date of £150,000.
- **Development of Hammonds Farm** - as part of the City Council's review of the Local Plan an option was proposed that included the development of 4,000 houses on Hammonds Farm. Council led on a petition objecting to the possible inclusion of this site for development delivering the document to City Council. The next stage of the Local Plan review will be consulted on early 2024. A Working Group of Parish and City councillors with the support of local MP John Whittingdale, is looking at making Little Baddow and Danbury an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to avert any major developments in the villages.
- **Colam Lane** – Council is pressing Chelmsford City Council to take enforcement action against unapproved planning developments along Colam Lane.
- **Memorial Hall & Sport Pavilion** – the upgrading of the hall and pavilion continues with many improvements completed and planned. A new heating system and furniture has been installed in the Pavilion. The hall is the focus of a three-year plan to reduce its energy requirements through insulation and more efficient heating systems, saving both money and the environment. Repairs to the damage caused by a vehicle collision will be completed in June.
- **Ride London** – Assembly was advised about the road closures in the village on Saturday 27th May to accommodate the Ride London cycling event. The Chairman spoke of the Council's disappointment at not being consulted before cycle routes were confirmed and will request organisers to not hold the event in 2024.

The Chairman closed by thanking the following people and teams for their hard work and support for the village:

- County Councillor John Spence
- Chelmsford City Ward Councillors past and present: Ian Wright, Richard Ambor, Steph Scott, Julia Jeapes and Jacob Armstrong
- Mrs Jane Rigler and the Neighbourhood Plan Committee
- Mr Keith Ferguson for advice on many matters
- Little Baddow Cricket Club for their maintenance of the sports field

Reports (Inc Charities)

Written reports including the financial overview were in the Spring Newsletter with copies having been distributed to all households in the village at the beginning of the month. The reports from Charities are available on the Little Baddow website when published each year.

Introduction to Parish Councillors

Chairman Cllr Peter Irvine introduced the Councillors and the Parish Clerk, thanking them for their work and support.

Guest Speaker

City Councillor Julia Jeapes was invited to speak at the Assembly on the nature and benefits of 'Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty' (AONB).

AONB's were established in 1949 to conserve and enhance the environment and for Little Baddow it would preserve and protect the area against development. Natural England set the criteria for creating an AONB.

A Working Group has been established to complete the application process; membership is made up of Ward City Councillors and local Parish Councillors. There are four key steps:

- Understanding all aspects of the application process and how best to proceed
- Creating a 'Base Line' of what natural and historic features already exist in the area, for example highlighting Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- Engaging local residents to assist in the gathering of evidence, for example reports on flora and fauna in the area.
- Community then endorses the application process.

Councillor Jeapes was pragmatic in saying that the process will take time and will not be easy to achieve. Overall, it is felt that evidence gathering will take about 2 years and Natural England will then review new applications in 2025.

Neighbourhood Plan

Mrs Jane Rigler provided a progress update on the Little Baddow Neighbourhood Plan. The Steering Committee has been working on the Plan for six years and Mrs Rigler was pleased to report that the process is nearly complete.

Following the completion of the external independent examination there were only a few minor amendments, and it was recommended that the Plan should go to the next stage of a Local Referendum. Chelmsford City Council Planning will manage the referendum and it is hoped to be held later this year.

Presentation of Community Awards

The Chairman was very pleased to recognise the work of the following residents in making the village a better place to live:

- Mrs Maxine Irvine
- Mrs Barbara Teal
- Mrs Elizabeth Willington

The Chairman presented a bouquet of flowers to Mrs Yvonne Spence as consort to Cllr John Spence.

Public Question Time

There were no questions from the assembly attendees.

Cllr John Spence addressed the Assembly reflecting on his 10 years as County Councillor for the Chelmer Division which includes Little Baddow. He supports the work of the Parish Council in maintaining the integrity of the village and the level of community engagement to

secure the future of the village. However, there has to be a recognition of the need to balance the wishes of residents with the needs of visitors to the area. Cllr Spence is actively looking at the need for parking at Paper Mill Lock with the ECC Cabinet member for Highways and has endorsed the need for a safety survey on The Ridge to combat speeding.

Cllr Spence gave an overview of other larger infrastructure projects including A12 widening; Army & Navy roundabout and Beaulieu rail station, that may impact the village through potential for additional traffic 'rat running' while works are underway.

As the ECC Cabinet member for Health & Adult Social Care Cllr Spence provided some background on his responsibility for the £800m budget for Social Care in Essex to deliver 'joined up solutions' for the growing mental health issues in the county.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.20pm

Chairman

May 2024