

Playford Parish Council

Chairman's Report 2011/12

2011/12 has been in many ways an exciting and rewarding year for Playford.

The village itself has enjoyed a number of social gatherings at the Village Hall and the Village green is regularly used by the youth of the village. We are very lucky to have a vibrant Village Hall committee, a tirelessly active Women's Institute and a strong parochial organisation; all of whom work hard for the benefit of the village and its inhabitants. In the near future we all look forward over the Bank Holiday weekend to celebrating the Queens Diamond Jubilee together as a village.

Turning to the specific work of the Parish Council, in terms of large scale strategic issues, the Parish Council has engaged with you on two large consultative exercises: the Draft National Planning Framework, and the planning application for the proposed offshore wind farm.

The Council has also invited villagers to discuss a couple of major planning applications: one for an extension to the Kesgrave Town cemetery and one for the creation of some garden allotments. There was also a number of smaller applications for planning, for example, extensions to private dwellings in the Parish.

Looking at the large strategic pieces first, the draft National Planning framework proposed removing over 1000 pages of planning regulations and guidance to make the planning process less

bureaucratic. The Parish Council and village recognised the risk that this might pose to the local environment and, concerned as we were about inappropriate development, worked hard to learn, understand, explain and finally to contribute our views to the District Council planners and Nationally via our consultation responses. Latest news is that a revised National Planning framework reflects the concerns that Playford, along with several hundred other respondents raised in relation to development and the value of rural landscapes.

The Village has been represented at local consultative events regarding the wind farm proposals by Joan Metcalfe – and I would like to note and thank her for her commitment and generosity in representing us. The Parish Council has advised villagers that the proposed cable route affects parish land, and we have invited comments so that we can feed these up the line in due course. The Parish Council will continue to understand the implications of this development and engage with the Village on them, especially in relation to and disruption to the village or degradation to the village environment both during development (should the development proceed) and afterwards. The Parish Council, on behalf the village, will continue engaging with planners and contractors both informally and by responding to formal consultative processes.

In response to these large scale regulatory and planning issues the Parish Council both independently and consultatively with neighbouring Parish and the District Councils, has discussed if establishing Local Plans would provide better protection for the village or if the District Council – owned Local Planning Framework provides adequate protection. Following these discussions the Parish Council thinks that, on balance, Playford's interests are likely to be

well served by the Local Planning Framework. However, other local Parishes and Councils may be in a different position, and the Parish Council remains aware that the rural environment Playford enjoys at its borders is as equally important to its residents as the rest of the Parish area. Therefore, the Parish Council will continue to take appropriate steps to engage with neighbouring Parishes.

One example of this is the intention to review our Neighbourhood Plan. In this way, the Parish Council will continue to talk to neighbouring Parish Councils, the district and County councils on the best way to ensure the quality of life for Playford residents is protected and enhanced through such times of change.

During 2011/12 Playford Parish Council has engaged villagers on the planning applications it has received. Playford has a specific approach to consulting on planning applications and during the year has called specific Village meetings to discuss planning applications, notably, the application to use some parish land for a cemetery extension for Kesgrave Town, the establishment of some garden allotments, for the Kesgrave Allotment Society, as well as major planning proposals to significant properties within Playford. These meetings have been enthusiastically supported by villagers and provided very valuable contributions that have helped Playford respond to planning applications.

The Parish Council recognises that there is always room for improvement in the way that these processes work. So, the Parish Council plans to review how we consult on planning applications – especially in relation to Neighbourhood plan work and the broader strategic planning picture. We will continue to ensure that the Village is always appropriately consulted on planning matters.

The Parish Council has routinely discussed issues relating to highways, including byways, paths and BOATS (Byways open to all traffic), and issues relating to the general fabric and upkeep of the village itself, including maintenance of hedges and trees in the village. We have reviewed our finances for the coming years and agreed a small increase to the Parish Precept in anticipation of some expected additional maintenance expenditure.

During the year, we have been fortunate to continue the benefit from the services provided by the Community Payback team, who have continued to keep the central parts of the Village looking well tended. We also must thank SCS for the excellent job of trimming the Village green hedge and to Willam Stennett and Charles Lofts for taking action to keep the roadside hedges cut back. We also note and thank the Playford WI for their efforts to keep the village free of litter and the fruits of their bulb – planting which gave the central parts of the Village a good splash of colour this spring.

We also thank the Highways department for their work to liaise with and subsequently remodel the roadside kerbing outside High Meadows; removing a risk to road users due to an inappropriate road narrowing. We also must thank Joan Metcalfe for registering Church Lane online as being unsuitable for large vehicles; hopefully reducing the risk of damage to property and gardens in the future. The village is still concerned about traffic volumes and speed along the main Village Roads and have recently raised these concerns again with the Highways Department. It would seem that the major challenge to worthwhile change in this area is the cost.

The Parish Council has some concerns over appropriate use of some of the village BOAT's, especially how open access to some is

compromised by their use by inappropriate vehicles, and is consulting with the District Council on what could be done. In other work, the Parish Council is also supporting efforts to re-establish a local footpath across fields to the north of the Village. Similarly, in response to concern due to the loss of a local copse, the Village is requesting a preservation order is put on another. We thank Ted and Sally Herrington for their help in these matters.

The Parish Council relies on villagers reporting and raising issues such as these so that the appropriate action, or reporting can be taken. We note our thanks for those villagers who take the time to contact us about such matters and encourage more of the same in the future.

I would also like to thank my fellow councillors and all those who have contributed to the maintenance of the quality of life in the Parish. I'd like to make a special note of thanks to Mr John Day who was the Chair of the Parish Council for the first part of the year. I also want to thank the Parish Clerk, Sarah Cartwright for her work, help and advice in particular, as a new Chair, to me.

Simon Hanson 1 May 2012