

2016/2017 ANNUAL REPORT OF LAKENHEATH PARISH COUNCIL

The Annual Parish Meeting is an opportunity for the Parish Council to let parishioners know of all the good work they carry out. It is also an opportunity for residents to have their say.

PLANNING

A number of issues for the Parish Council, this year, have again been planning related. There remains a number of large residential planning applications outstanding. The Forest Heath District Council, Local Plan prompted the Parish Council to hold an additional drop in event which was very well attended and again highlighted that in general, the village was unaware of the extent of the proposed developments and does NOT want the proposed large-scale residential expansion. The Parish Council will continue in their endeavours to prevent unnecessary growth, particularly as a result of the new noise contours received from the MOD.

The Parish Council continues to be of the opinion that there is not sufficient infrastructure in place to cope with the proposed expansion, especially in relation to Highways (roads and virtually non-existent public transport), Healthcare, Employment and Education, both primary and pre-school. With the help of various professionals, the Parish Council continues to try and stem this growth.

Following the successful challenge by Lord Derby and the Rural Parish Alliance (Lakenheath Parish Council are a member), the Secretary of State's earlier decision to refuse development at Hatchfield Farm, Newmarket has been quashed by the High Court. This is good news as it could relieve the need for inappropriate growth here and elsewhere. However, it will be no surprise to learn that the Horsemen's Group believe that yet again this decision is wrong and are attempting an appeal.

The Parish Council continue to monitor building alterations in the village. They are consultees but ultimate decisions are with Forest Heath District Council. Following several complaints from parishioners, attempts were made, unsuccessfully, to stop the covering of the flintwork to the gable ends of the new Japanese Restaurant. Although in the village conservation area, it was deemed too late for the district's planning enforcement team to act. It is acknowledged that the work is not desirable from a conservation perspective, but for a number of reasons it is not considered expedient to take any further action. Sadly another part of the historic village scene has been lost.

RAF COMMANDER LAKENHEATH

Squadron Leader Jerry Neild continues to be a regular attendee at monthly Parish Council meetings, fostering good relations between USAF Lakenheath and the village.

The village continues to benefit from voluntary work carried out by USAF personnel and for that the Parish Council have been grateful.

SUFFOLK CONSTABULARY

Inspector Mark Shipton, Local Policing Commander - Forest Heath District is unfortunately not able to attend today but is happy for any questions to be sent to him at Mark.shipton@suffolk.pnn.police.uk.

FOREST HEATH DISTRICT COUNCIL

Councillors Louise Marston and Colin Noble continue to represent the Parishioners at Forest Heath District Council.

SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL

Councillor Colin Noble continues to represent the Parish at Suffolk County Council.

CELTIC CROSS

An important sculpture placed on a mound within the nature reserve on Maids Cross Hill. The stainless steel plates, inscribed with poems written by locals, were removed many years ago. However, the Parish Council have successfully had them returned to the village for safe keeping. Subject to funding it is proposed that with the help of Forest Heath District Council's Senior Warden, that the sculpture will be restored to its former glory. The nature reserve is now also included in a heritage trail.

CEMETERY

Steven Aldous continues to work hard keeping the cemetery neat and tidy. The Parish Council sought advice on tree management in the old section. It was decided to remove a number of the limes in the avenue of trees. This will allow those that are left, to flourish and reduce the need for future pollarding. Apple trees from the Garden of Rest have also been removed. This will help to keep the area clear of leaves and fruit and also help the memorials to settle.

ERISWELL ROAD PLAY AREA

This is a very popular area for children of the village. Further improvements have been made, with the Cable Runway and Basket Swing replaced. The toilet block has had additional work along with the addition of a new baby changing unit. Vandalism continues to be a problem and the Parish Council asks residents to be vigilant.

HM THE QUEEN 90TH BIRTHDAY

To celebrate HM the Queen's 90th Birthday, the Parish Council presented each child at Lakenheath Community Primary School with a commemorative coin. It has also placed a commemorative bench on the corner of Wings Road and Wingfield Road.

LAKENHEATH PLAYING FIELDS

The Parish Council continues to support Lakenheath Playing Fields Association in a number of ways – management and maintenance of the toilet block and general tidying. With increasing premiums the Parish Council was also pleased to fund insurance costs for the Skate Park and MUGA.

LAKENHEATH TIMES

An army of dedicated volunteer deliverers, continue to deliver the Lakenheath Times on a monthly basis to every household in Lakenheath, Sedge Fen and Undley. It's a brilliant way to let the village know what's going on along with views and ideas from residents. As delivery rounds lose a deliverer it is becoming more and more difficult to attract volunteers. Undley is a fine example and was thankfully, eventually filled by the teenage daughter of visiting USAF personnel. Sedge Fen continues to be available. A big thank you again to all the dedicated deliverers that make it happen. Some articles of interest and relating to the village would also be appreciated.

LITTER BINS

The litter bins along the High Street were in a varying state of disrepair and some missing completely. There is also the continuing problem of dog fouling. The Parish Council supported Forest Heath District Council and replaced all with dual purpose litter and dog foul bins.

PARISH CLERK / PARISH OFFICE

The Parish Office is an integral way of bringing the work of the Parish Council closer to the residents of the village. The office hours continue to be 9:00 am to 12 Noon, Monday to Friday.

PRECEPT

The precept for the year 2016/17 was set at £140,164 and it has been set at £142,390 for the year 2017/18. Costs include public toilets at both Wings Road and Eriswell Road, refuse collection, power, fuel, St Mary's closed churchyard, the cemetery and responsibility for replacing deteriorating concrete lighting columns, MBFU lanterns and G39 issues (where electricity wires pass very close to lanterns).

The Parish Council has worked hard to keep forecast net expenditure to a minimum, £142,390 in 2017/18 against £143,217 in 2016/17. The loss of the Local Council Tax Support Grant results in a small increase to the precept but again ensures a 0% increase to Council Tax bills.

ST MARYS CHURCHYARD

The church wall along the Back Street is finished. The Parish Council are pleased with the superb work that has been done.

S. 137 GRANTS

This money is granted by the Parish Council to organisations which are considered to directly benefit at least some of the inhabitants of the Parish. Generally to Community and Voluntary organisations, for which the Council has no specific authority. The beneficiaries this year were:

- £250 - Suffolk Accident Rescue Service
- £500 - EACH
- £25 - Community Action Suffolk
- £200 - Lakenheath Good Neighbours
- £180 - Lakenheath PCC

SPEEDWATCH

Following concerns from Parishioners about the increase in speeding vehicles through the village. A request for volunteers was published in the Lakenheath Times and after a number of residents came forward, a Speed-Watch operation was set up. The equipment was purchased with the support of Councillors Noble and Marston. Thanks to all the volunteers that dedicate their time to this important venture.

SPEED INDICATOR DEVICE

To support SpeedWatch, the Parish Council with the support of Councillor Noble have purchased a Mobile Speed Indicator device (otherwise known as SID). 'He' will be regularly moved around the village with positions on Station Road, Eriswell Road and Undley Road.

VILLAGE SIGN

Following renovation, the Village Sign is back. With the support of Councillor Marston replacing and maintaining the grass, and a parishioner arranging the new lavender plants it is looking great. Look out for further improvements to the footpath area.

WAR MEMORIAL

The war memorial was cleaned with the support of a grant from the War Memorial Trust. To complete the job, the vases were also replaced with the addition of flowers and new pebbles placed around the base.

WINGS ROAD CAR PARK TOILETS

These continue to be open and maintained.