

## **Annual report by the Chairman of the Sampfords Parish Council for the year ended 31 March, 2016**

### **1 Constitution of the Council**

The Sampfords Parish Council comprises 9 Councillors of which 6 reside in Great Sampford and 3 in Little Sampford. Elections are held every four years and the term of office of the current members will expire at the Annual General Meeting to be held in 2019. I was elected as Chairman of the Council at the commencement of the current four year term. The other members of the Council comprise William Burton (Deputy Chairman), Rhiann Chappell, Graham Keen, Jane Lawrence, Kath Thompson, George Smith, Kay Adie and Gordon Deuce. Their current responsibilities are set out in the Appendix to this Report.

Mike Palmer (who retired from the Council at the AGM in May 2015) kindly continues to offer his services to the Council on planning matters where he has considerable expertise.

### **2 Meetings and training**

The Council's year runs from 1 April to 31 March. During the year under review, the Council met on 6 occasions, namely 14 May, 25 June, 17 September and 29 October, 2015 and 21 January and 10 March, 2016. We had 100% attendance at one meeting, 89% attendance at three meetings, 78% attendance at one meeting and 67% attendance at the remaining meeting, an average attendance rate of 85%. In addition, the annual Parish Assembly was held on 2 April, 2015. Thus a total of seven meetings were held in the year under review.

No Councillor attended a training course during the year under review.

### **3 Finance**

You may have noticed from your Council Tax bill for the year to 31 March, 2017 that the amount levied by Uttlesford is 3.5% more than the amount levied for the year to 31 March, 2016. As part of this calculation, you may also have seen that the precept (that part of the Council Tax bill that is levied by the Parish Council) was 1.6% more than the amount levied in 2015/16. I am assured that this 1.6% increase compares favourably with many other local parishes.

I can report that the finances of the Village Hall Committee (under the prudent leadership of James Smith as Chairman and Jill Palmer as Treasurer) have once again been very well managed during the year under review. However, it cannot be overemphasised that the income stream for the Village Hall Committee (VHC) is largely dependent on letting income from hiring out the fine Village Hall and so I encourage everyone in the Parish to consider hiring the Hall for a suitable occasion, whenever this is feasible.

No contribution to the VHC's funds has been requested during the year under review.

### **4 What has the Council achieved during the year to 31 March, 2016 ?**

- 4.1 Grass cutting in the parish has continued to be regularly and efficiently carried out by Chris Butcher who has also helped with the grasscutting at St. Michael's and St. Mary's churches;
- 4.2 The Council has ensured that the village salt bins are suitably stocked for use in the case of icy roads, although there has been little need for salt during the 2015/6 winter season;
- 4.3 Further work has been undertaken on the parish footpath booklet which remains unpublished. The Council proposes to outsource the remaining work needed to complete the booklet as soon as practicable after the start of the 2016/7 financial year;
- 4.4 Once again, a successful litter pick was carried out on 19 March, 2016 with another good turnout, including several younger members of the parish which was pleasing;
- 4.5 The defibrillator unit mentioned in last year's review has been installed outside the School and is available for use should it be needed. A training session conducted by Heartbeat Trust explaining how it should be operated was held in the Village Hall on 9 January, 2016.

The Council has procured a second defibrillator which has been installed on the exterior wall of the lavatory block in the churchyard at St. Mary's, Little Sampford. At the time of preparing this report, this defibrillator is not active pending registration with the ambulance service. It has generously been provided at no cost to the Council by a charitable trust based in Finchingfield known as the Creamer Fund.

Thanks go to Rhiann Chappell for masterminding the installation of the 2 defibrillators and for organising the training session, and to Lil May and Anthea McMyn for agreeing to carry out regular checks on their efficacy.

- 4.6 The Council from time to time receives requests for a grant from various organisations. For the year under review, the Council awarded £250 to the Saffron Walden Branch of Citizens Advice Bureau, £200 to each of Essex Air Ambulance and the Thaxted Minibus Trust and £50 to each of Heartbeat Trust and Childreach International.
- 4.7 The Council has arranged an external inspection of the Play Area and has adopted in full the recommendations contained in the resultant report;
- 4.8 Sampfords Signal (the weekly email newsletter that announces forthcoming events in the parish) has now been in operation for more than three years and continues to be a very useful tool for communication with the local community;  
The Council wishes to thank Rebecca Kincaid for all the work that she puts in to ensure prompt publication;
- 4.9 The Council has given some minor tasks to the organisation known as Highway Rangers which has been established to carry out small jobs within the parish that Uttlesford does not have time to carry out;
- 4.10 Following an approach from the Council, Essex County Council are looking into funding for a new bus shelter in the village;
- 4.11 The Council wishes to record its thanks to Margaret and Maurice Suckling for continuing to care so lovingly for the garden surrounding Maurice's jubilee memorial by the bridge in Great Sampford and to Eric and Edna Banks for maintaining the Play Area garden following the death of Arthur Bradford.
- 4.12 The Council has been successful in obtaining a grant from Uttlesford D.C. for £2,250 under the Community Grant Scheme which is being used as a contribution to the cost of creating some additional car parking space in the churchyard at St. Michael's Church. The total cost of this work is £6,600 with the balance being provided by the Parish Council (£2500) and the P.C.C. (£1850);
- 4.13 In the Play area:
- A) the dilapidated shed has been dismantled and removed;
  - B) the crossbar on the zipwire(which was cracked) has been replaced by Fenland Leisure from whom the Council bought the zipwire;
  - C) post and rail fencing on the boundary with the Baptist churchyard has been erected following the removal of the shed; and
  - D) safety aspects of the Play Area are checked regularly by the Council and recorded in a book.
- 4.14 It transpires that the governance arrangements surrounding the charity known as the Village Hall Committee are such that the charity is in breach of certain provisions of the Trust Deed under which it was constituted. To this end the VHC has written to organisations within the parish inviting them to nominate from within their membership a person to represent that organisation on the VHC and to act as a trustee. The VHC is being advised by the Rural Communities Council of Essex.
- 4.15 The Council has written to all the residents in Parsonage Farm Lane concerning the speeding problems associated with the road which make it dangerous for parents to walk their children to the village school. We have been told that it will not be possible to install speed bumps at the bottom of the Lane because this would also require the installation of street lighting;
- 4.16 A new salt bin has been purchased and sited in Willetts Field, and a number of stiles and kissing gates have been replaced on the footpaths;
- 4.17 The question of Affordable Housing has again been considered by the Council in the context of a proposal from one landowner who has expressed a willingness to make land available for

a mixture of affordable and open market houses. The Council has resolved to do nothing at this stage pending the finalisation of the Local Plan;

- 4.18 The Council is investigating the possibility of adopting a scheme known as VETS (Village Emergency Telephone Scheme) that would benefit locals living on their own who get into difficulty or otherwise need help.
- 4.19 The Council has been unable to find volunteers interested in becoming involved with a Speed Gun initiative whose purpose is to monitor the speed of motorists passing through Great Sampford;
- 4.20 The Council has had to review a large number of planning applications where (as mentioned above) we have been able to draw on the experience and expertise of Mike Palmer. Although these have not yet been converted into formal planning applications, the most significant factor in this regard arises as a result of the local response to Uttlesford's Call for Sites mentioned in paragraph 5.2 below;
- 4.21 Some potholes have been filled in within the parish during the year under review and some resurfacing has been carried out but there remains work to be done. The passing places in Howe Lane and the ruts in Maynards Lane require attention. The Council is in regular correspondence with Essex Highways regarding these matters but in reality is powerless to take any action if delays occur.

No progress appears to have been made on the introduction of Quiet Lanes (mentioned in my report last year) in the county.

## 5 The year ahead to 31 March, 2017

- 5.1 The Council has arranged for County Broadband Limited to make a presentation to the local community in the Village Hall on Thursday, 14 April regarding the provision of high speed broadband to the parish.
- 5.2 Following the Call for Sites issued by Uttlesford D.C., enough sites have been put forward to fulfil the building of 40,000 houses whereas Uttlesford are only required to build some 5,000 houses over the next five years. There will be further consultation on the draft Local Plan during 2016/7 with a public examination by the Inspector in August/ September 2017. Meanwhile, in relation to the 2 sites in Great Sampford deemed as potentially suitable for small scale development (off Sparepenny Lane North and South respectively), it remains to be seen whether they will be included in the next draft of the Local Plan or whether Uttlesford will opt for a single new development rather than spreading small developments around several local villages.
- 5.3 Households in the parish will soon be circulated with details of a new bus scheme proposed to be introduced in April 2016 which will provide a "demand responsive transport service" operating rather like a taxi service under which people wanting to go somewhere will phone in advance and "order" a bus to collect them from their home and take them to their destination for a fee. The buses will hold around 15 seats and cover the Saffron Walden/Braintree area.
- 5.4 The Council is required to keep under review the provision of an area of land that can be used as allotments for the benefit of the local community. However, without the availability of a suitable tract of land, there is little that the Council can achieve

Finally, as I shall be stepping down from the Council at the AGM on 12 May, I would like to place on record my profound thanks to all those who have served on the Council over the past 5 years, or have contributed to Council business in other ways, for all their valuable input to Council business both at meetings and at other times as well. I naturally include our excellent District Councillor, Simon Howell, and our diligent County Councillor, Simon Walshe in this context. I should also thank our super efficient Clerk, Sarah Parker, for all that she has done to make my job that much easier.

I have much enjoyed working with you all.

Christopher Robinson,  
Chairman, Sampfords Parish Council

1 April 2016

## Appendix

| <b>Name</b>                            | <b>Responsibilities</b>                                    |
|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| Gordon Deuce and William Burton        | Planning and Affordable housing                            |
| Kay Adye, Kath Thompson and George Smi | Play Area and Youth                                        |
| Chris Robinson and Graham Keen         | Finance                                                    |
| Jane Lawrence                          | Publicity                                                  |
| Graham Kee                             | Grasscutting, Trees, Litter Pick                           |
| Rhiann Chappell                        | Liaison with Village Organisations,<br>Neighbourhood Watch |
| Graham Keen and Kath Thompson          | Transport, Village Assets                                  |
| Chris Robinson and Jane Lawrence       | Village Hall                                               |
| George Smith                           | Sport                                                      |
| Rhiann Chappell and George Smith       | Broadband, Website and Events                              |
| William Burton                         | Highways, Footpaths                                        |