



LITTLE CHALFONT COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

15 MARCH 2017

Introduction

Looking forward 12 months ago, I anticipated that we would be kept busy with the Emerging Local Plan and that there may be a need to review how we operated, given that our resources were stretched at times.

The Local Plan proved to be very challenging and so much so that your committee was not able to review its operations. We have not been able to fill our vacant committee roles but, despite this, we managed to maintain progress on most of our activities.

Emerging Local Plan

Two Consultations, two sets of Public Meetings and encouraging the community to respond, were very demanding on our time but, it has to be said, very worthwhile – at least so far!

For both consultations, the community rallied round and throughout the Chiltern and South Bucks Districts, the level of responses far exceeded any other community and reflected the deep concern felt by our residents, particularly about the potential release of Green Belt land for the building of up to 1000 dwellings.

Addressing these consultations would not have been possible without the dedicated members of the Coordination Group (formed jointly with the Parish Council and consisting of representatives of both organisations plus two residents) and I commend each one of them to you.

There is a long way to go before the outcome is known and there will be a further consultation on the Draft Local Plan, presently scheduled for October/November 2017.

(There will be a brief update in the meeting that follows the AGM).

Other Planning

Waste Transfer Station

There has been the good news that the Waste Transfer Station will not be going ahead. The representations made on your behalf were more than outweighed by the 'group of concerned residents' – many of them members and ably led by Andrew Blatherwick – whose representations proved to be very much on the mark.

We should be aware, however, that with all the development that will take place in the south of the county, the need for such a transfer facility could rear its head again.

Harvard Grange (Donkey Field)

We are indebted to Michael Cohn, who has maintained regular contact throughout the year with the Site Manager(s) and through his efforts, issues that could have been problematical were cooperatively resolved.

As the development has progressed, the level of co-operation from the developers has actually decreased (not exactly a surprise) but completion is imminent and we look forward to welcoming all the residents to the community.

Chenies Mews (Land at the end of Chenies Parade)

Prior to the work starting, a relationship was established by the Association and Parish Council with both the developers and contractors. This was with the aim of having arrangements in place to minimise the disruption that would undoubtedly be experienced.

The resultant Construction Management Plan, agreed jointly, has undoubtedly proved its value and overall, the aim has been achieved. Links have been created with Chenies Parade occupants and with the development now well under way, we are meeting on a regular basis with the contractors to ensure that the level of communication is maintained.

Yes – there has been some inconvenience and this was always expected but both sides and, indeed, the community, have shown the patience and understanding sought.

Neighbourhood Plan

There was some interest shown by members in whether or not the Parish Council should be pursuing a Neighbourhood Plan and we were able to advise that the Coordination Group was researching if this would be beneficial.

Stephanie Buller, as your committee member for Neighbourhood Development, has played a major role. Her expertise is in this area and she has also been part of the Coordination Group. She has been of enormous benefit to the committee and Parish Council in preparing a detailed analysis and in helping the debate.

A decision has yet to be made, as creation of such a Plan is costly and time consuming and to date, the case is not clear-cut. Further consideration is needed and we will keep you advised.

Membership

As you know from my previous reports, maintaining and increasing our membership is an unenviable but vital task and, whilst maintaining last year's level, we have again been unable to achieve any material increase in the membership.

I am indebted to Adrian Lockyer, who does a sterling job for us as Membership Secretary and share his disappointment that efforts to encourage membership from residents who benefit from our activities, met with minimal response. This was particularly noticeable following the two Local Plan Consultations and Public Meetings.

If there is anything that you, our existing members, could do in encouraging your friends and neighbours in Little Chalfont to join the Association, we should be most grateful.

Finance

Whilst our financial position is reasonably strong at present, we have been drawing on reserves to respond to the important Emerging Local Plan issues and replacing our assets is a constant challenge. These include the Christmas Lights, hanging baskets and equipment needed for Village Day (e.g. gazebos). Gaining new members is part of the answer but, with grant funding for operating and capital costs being harder to achieve, there could be a threat to some of our activities.

We are clearly aware of the situation and will take whatever steps we can to ensure that our objectives can continue to be achieved.

Good Neighbours

Your committee has always been keen to encourage and facilitate a community where residents help each other and, over the last few years, we have looked for ways to achieve this sustainably. There are lots of good ideas but putting something in place that will prove to be permanent has been the hurdle.

To some extent, our efforts have been restricted by availability of people to help but some progress is being made, as we have facilitated initiatives that have been started by others. The new Simply Walks in the village (a weekly walk on Mondays) and a monthly Luncheon Club are two examples.

Helen Tyers, who joined the committee last year is making a difference, ably supported by Shirley Strange and we are hopeful of seeing further progress in the future.

In this connection, the Parish Council share our aspirations and we will continue to work with them to achieve results.

Your Committee

You will have read from the AGM Notice that our number of vacancies has grown and there are key roles that need to be filled, if the committee is to function without the existing committee members taking on those responsibilities. All are important but the roles of 'Business Coordinator' and 'PR & Communication' are crucial to our effectiveness and I would urge you to give some thought to suggesting names of people that you know who could be prepared to join the committee.

We shall also be losing Stephanie Buller this year, as she is moving from Little Chalfont. As I have reported above, her contribution has been substantial and we have been fortunate in being able to draw on her skills. She will be missed.

Against this background, I am very aware of the pressures on all the existing committee members and, in addition to those already mentioned, I include Lisa Horne (Secretary), Ted Cooper (Treasurer) Shirley Strange (Voluntary Organisations) and Tony O'Sullivan (Planning) in expressing very sincere thanks to them all, both personally and on behalf of the membership, for their dedication and support.

Volunteers

As always, my grateful thanks go to all who help us in volunteering on Village Day and delivering the newsletters of both the Association and Parish Council.

In 2016, there were additional leaflets to be delivered alongside the newsletters, so I am doubly grateful.

Thank you too, to Paul Nicholls for running Village Day and for agreeing to organise it again in 2017.

Sponsorship

Having highlighted some concerns on the financial front, I cannot complete my report without mentioning the support received from our businesses. The financial success of Village Day is down to all the shops and businesses who advertise in the programme and support in other ways. Special thanks also go to the following:

- GE Healthcare for its overall support to our activities, including the covering of the cost of a substantial number of hanging baskets.
- The Entertainer, which donates many prizes for events organised by ourselves and other groups in the community.
- Citygate for sponsoring the Fun Run on Village Day and matching the net proceeds for the benefit of local charities. Also for covering the cost of its hanging baskets.
- Tesco for supplying refreshments for the Fun Run and other locally run events.

Outlook

It feels a bit like a broken record but saying that 2017 is looking like another year that will be dominated by the Emerging Local Plan is nevertheless expected to be accurate. However, we will continue to face the challenge 'head on'.

The threat of up to 1000 new homes on the Green Belt land proposed for release is of deep concern to the membership and, as much as we understand the country's challenge for new homes, we will continue to work with the Parish Council (through the Coordination Group), to resist the release of this land – keeping you all informed.

The start of the construction of HS2 and the outcome of the Unitary Authority debate could also provide further challenges but I remain optimistic that, provided that we have increased committee resource, we will again be able to represent your interests to the level required and continue to deliver improvements.

The outcome of the current consultation on the Community Action Plan will also play an important role in providing focus for projects and their funding.

Roger Funk

Chairman

13 March 2017

