

WAKES COLNE PARISH COUNCIL

Chairwoman's Report

Do you sometimes get the feeling of going round in circles when trying to tackle a task and make progress?! Well, that is certainly the feeling the Parish Clerk and I have, despite the support of our County Councillor, in trying to deal with any issue to do with Essex County Council Highways (ECC) or the Local Highways Panel (LHP). We have been surveying our highways-related problems (speeding, signage, pavements, overgrown hedges, etc) around Wakes Colne and now have a list of about 30, some of which have been outstanding for a very long time. For the most part, because they are not a parish responsibility and/or have health and safety implications, we can do nothing about them, other than to keep making reports and pressing for action. The answers are a repeated mantra of no money, the pandemic, not a priority. We were offered a site visit by the ECC portfolio holder several months ago, but this has been twice postponed. We all know about: the speeding issues in Station Rd without a footway, the increase in heavy goods vehicles and size of agricultural vehicles; the growing congestion at Chappel Corner – which at times seems to have become more like Piccadilly Circus – and the bizarre and unsafe driving behaviour of some motorists in that vicinity; and the inconsiderate parking of some visiting the Post Office and shop, obscuring visibility and impairing pedestrian access and safety on the pavement. We still hope to be able to demonstrate the traffic situation to the portfolio holder and make renewed suggestions for improvement of the sites as a whole. We've only been waiting for this in Station Rd for over 20 years! Another problematic area, which used to be regularly cleared, is the pavement along the A1124 from Chappel Corner to Lane Rd. We have been going round in circles on this for nearly 3 years. Finally, we have a quote from a contractor who is authorised to undertake the work, but, even so, it will require permission from Highways for the provision of temporary traffic lights for the security of the workforce and the removal of debris.

Where at all possible, we have been trying independently to improvements to our village. The footway at the top of Station Rd and the junction of Station Approach has been extended so that pedestrians can now walk in safety round the corner, without having to go into the main road or get muddy. Just around the corner in Station Approach, with the kind permission of the East Anglian Railway Museum, we have installed two salt bins with salt for the winter. The bins contain 25kg bags of salt, which residents can collect without charge for distribution in areas of need on untreated roads in their areas, not on private drives.



We have also been trying to tidy up Chappel Corner (which is actually in Wakes Colne) but as fast as we make an improvement one or other of the utility companies (BT, County Broadband, Anglian Water (AW)) comes along and digs the land up again; we are awaiting reinstatement of grass near the telephone box by Telec and by AW at the corner of The Street. A new path has been laid to the post box and new paving slabs near the seat.



We closed down the Plant and Seed Swap (P&SS) in early October but intend that it will pop up again next spring. Thanks to those who supported it with seeds and plants and watering. A neighbour and I tidied up around the bus shelter and, together with a contractor, planted a few plants in the greensward. If anyone has any spare plants to donate for this purpose, please let the Parish Clerk know, or keep them for the (P&SS) re-opening.

We have a volunteer footpath clearance team, of parish council members and others, who are trying to meet monthly to tackle some overgrown vegetation near paths. We are next planning to tackle Footpath 15, where the bridge has recently at last been restored, west of The Claypits, between Crepping Hall Rd and Vernons Rd. Please get in touch with the Clerk if you would like to join us.

The Council has given a grant to cover purchase, installation, and annual maintenance of a defibrillator to be installed at the Cricket Club in Inworth Lane. When this is completed, we will inform you of its availability. Meanwhile the defibrillator located at the PO is regularly checked by members of the council.

Three other major issues are ongoing projects. We have decided to purchase a Vehicle Activated Sign in an attempt to monitor and reduce speeding on the A1124. An application is being made to Highways for it to be located in the vicinity of the village hall. Together with our Ward Councillor and the Chair of Chappel Parish Council (CPC), we have discussed, and are further considering, possible flood prevention equipment to be stored in readiness and in order to secure ongoing access to the village PO and shop as a community hub. An application has been made to the LHP for permission to store and display portable signage to warn of imminent flooding. Finally, together with CPC, we hosted a public meeting on the process of development of a neighbourhood plan. The meeting was well attended by over 40 residents, who were informed by a speaker from Colchester Borough Council on the process and possible benefits of such a plan, as well as the time commitment (as long as 4-6 years) and challenges of actually going through the process by two members of the team from Eight Ash Green. The work needs to be led by the community, with involvement of the

parish councils. If you are interested to know more please refer to: www.colchester.gov.uk/info/category/?id=neighbourhood-planning, or contact the Clerk.

WCPC usually meets in the village hall on the first Wednesday of each month. You are welcome to join us with any questions or comments in the public participation session. Other news and information are available on our noticeboards, website and on Facebook. Let us hope that this winter we shall be able to live our lives more safely and sociably alongside the virus in the new normal.

Monica J. Taylor (Dr.), Chairwoman, Wakes Colne Parish Council