

Widdington Annual Parish Meeting

Thursday 6th May, 2021

Welcome

Newly re-appointed Chair, Maria Orr welcomed 7 parishioners, Belinda Devenny and Del from Pathways, Councillors Chris Firmin, Maggs Webb, and clerk Amanda Lindsell to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Councillors Jill Brookman and Ian Southcott, County Councillor Ray Gooding and District Cllr Neil Hargreaves.

Minutes and matters arising from the 2019 Annual Parish Meeting

The minutes were agreed as an accurate representation of the meeting and signed by the clerk, on behalf of Chair Maria Orr.

Chair's Report

Chair Orr provided a Parish Council update (appendix one).

District and County Councillors Report

None submitted.

A Presentation from Belinda Devenny, Registered Homes Manager at Pathways

Belinda and manager Del provided a detailed update on the work at Pathways, explaining that it is a residential children's home, housing a maximum of five young people at one time. Pathways is the name of the home, which is part of the White Trees Sure Group of residential care homes. Pathways has moved from being a Crisis Residential Home to a Behavioural Residential Home.

They have a school in Bishop's Stortford (White Trees), although one of the current youngsters attends SWCHS. The behaviours are all different, they have had individuals who abscond, but not currently, similarly with drug issues. The current youngsters are very settled and range from 11 years (the youngest they would take) to 16 years, although they can stay until 18 years. There are 4 permanent staff plus the manager and trainee manager. At night there are 2 waking staff.

The aim of the home is to get the youngsters ready for the future, some return to their families, some see their parents, some parents visit. Pathways try to provide a therapeutic approach to the children, promote independence, create coping strategies and encourage the ability to move forward. They have their own therapeutic psychologist, preparing them for adulthood and to rejoin the outside world.

They are lovely children, who have coped so well with the pandemic and restrictions. Youngsters have the opportunity to attend theme parks, and go on holidays, to experience new things. Belinda has been with the company for five years and says the home is like a big family, they have boundaries, and it works well.

Chair Orr asked about funding and Belinda confirmed that they are funded by the local authority. Chair Orr offered the Parish Council's support with particular ongoing projects and Belinda noted that they do have limited funds and would be happy to liaise with the Parish Council in the future . Del confirmed that one youngster is attending SWCHS and is receiving help with prom costs through a local charity.

Chair Orr noted that the pandemic must have been super complicated for children in care and asked if there were particular challenges? Brenda and Del confirmed that it was extremely difficult, but the staff and young people had adapted amazingly, offering lots of in-house activities to the youngsters who couldn't see their families and were outstanding, it was a credit to the staff team keeping them entertained.

Cllr Firmin asked what the catchment is for the home and Brenda confirmed that referrals come from all over, with approximately 100 referrals through to pick one resident. There is a robust procedure to match youngsters to the home with those already present as best as possible.

Cllr Firmin asked if there is a maximum or minimum time to attend the home and Brenda confirmed that they would prefer if the 11 year old could progress to a foster home, but they can't currently accommodate his behaviour. There is currently a 16 year old who wants to stay until an adult, they do have a parent that visits, but all cases are individual.

Chair Orr thanked Belinda and Del for their interesting chat, and reiterated the offer to approach the Parish Council to work together to help out as a valued part of our community.

Belinda said if anyone has any concerns to always get in touch.

A Presentation from Essex Highways

Unfortunately County Cllr Gooding has not been possible to secure a speaker from Essex Highways.

The meeting closed at 9.06pm.