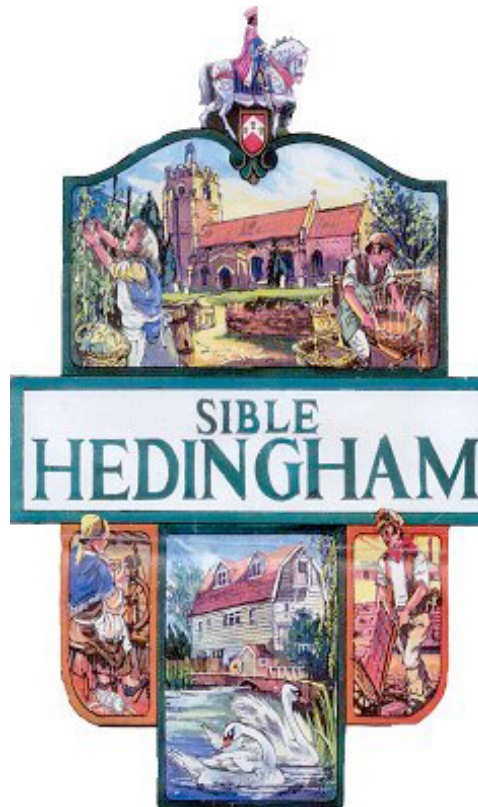


SIBLE HEDINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Annual Report 2103/14



Councillors as at March 2014

Gill Massey (Chairman)

Elsbeth Jones

John Skittrall (Vice Chairman)

Tony Law

Joanne Beavis

Steven Partridge

John Fennelly

Andrew Prill

Sally Glen

Ron Volkwyn

Derek Holmes

Lynda Waller

David Horn

Clerk to the Council: Adrian Corder Birch

Many thanks to the two councillors who have retired this year, namely Ronnie Green and Fred Swallow both of whom gave many years of service to the Council and the community. And welcome to their replacements David Horn and John Fenelly plus Ron Volkwyn who was co-opted in May 2013 after the earlier resignation of Christine Cannell.

This is the third Annual report I have written as Chairman of Sible Hedingham Parish Council and it is, once again, a pleasure to report on the progress made over the past year. The Parish Council has been active in a number of areas and has supported other village groups in various projects - the following is a selection.

One of the important areas of activity has been the progress on the former Premdor site which has now been cleared and awaits the start of the development of 193 homes. The Parish Council has tried to involve the community by consultation, the results of which were forwarded to Braintree District Council for consideration. Unfortunately, not all of our concerns were addressed, and while we gained some minor points, we were unsuccessful in retaining the inclusion of allotments on the site, which had been included as a requirement in Braintree District Council's Core Strategy. The question of a new Doctor's Surgery and Medical Centre on site is on-going - the developers will set aside land for the purpose but the task is now to persuade NHS England to provide funds to build it. The Parish Council initiated a series of meetings with the local doctors who are now working together with a specialist company to press the case.

There will be other gains to the community - a financial contribution towards Early Years and Primary Education; some highway improvements; a contribution for Sports provision, which it is hoped will be situated at the school but available for community use; seed funding for a daily bus to Sudbury following the preparation of a business case by the Parish Council; the construction of a "work hub"; informal public open space along the River Walk and what has been dubbed a "pocket park" at the front of the development; provision for "public art and character features", and the transfer of the former Natwest Bank building to the Parish Council. The Parish Council has pledged to retain the latter for community, not commercial benefit.

The new development will require street names and as long ago as 2009 BDC agreed that the Parish Council could put forward possible names which would be relevant to the history of the site and the Ripper family. A list was prepared at the time and has now been posted on the Parish Council website -

www.essexinfo.net/siblehedingham

together with the history behind each choice.

The day to day business of the Council continues as usual. Completed projects over the past year include:

- Another successful Legacy Day on the Recreation Ground (to be held again this year on July 5th)
- The installation of new Skate Park equipment, grant funded by Veolia Environment
- The provision of a Youth Shelter, grant funded by Essex Youth Strategy Group
- The acquisition of a hand operated snow plough, fortunately not actually called into service this winter, funded by the local Highways Panel
- Successful Community Bus trips to local attractions

These, and many other areas of activity are either raised at full council and delegated to a committee for action, or instigated in committee and referred back to full council for approval. Either way, the work done in committee is vital to the running of the council. Committee meetings are advertised on the notice boards and the website and are open to the public, with the usual 15 minutes allotted for public comment. Members of the public can be co-opted on to committees and are already present on the Highways & Public Transport Committee and Footpaths and PROW Advisory Group. A vacancy exists on the Recreation & Amenities Committee and we would welcome anyone interested in joining us as we feel it is important to have as many viewpoints as possible represented. Please contact the Clerk if interested.

Projects in the pipe-line include:

- The acquisition of land for allotments
- The provision of wheelchair access to the multi-use games area on the Recreation Ground
- Blue plaques to commemorate notable former residents, for which a grant has been obtained
- The purchase and installation of Speed Indicator devices to help combat speeding through the village
- A replacement storage container for the Recreation Ground and a new roof for the shed
- A welcome pack for new residents, with details of local clubs, societies, services and amenities. Any organisation interested in being included should contact the Chairman, via the Parish Clerk. It is hoped to enlist Hedingham school students to help with the cover design.

Further in the future, money has been set aside and ring-fenced for:

- A future community building when the current office lease expires
- Election expenses 2015
- Gateway signs
- Maintenance and repairs to the car park, when required

And two important things that have **not** changed:

- The precept for 2014/15 which remains the same as 2013/14
- The rules for the Garden of Remembrance. After much discussion and some unhelpful publicity from the local press, it has been decided not to make any changes to the rules.

Following the retirement of our long serving grass cutting contractor, a new company (Mortimers) was appointed for 2013 and they have received much praise for the quality of their work. Perhaps their efforts played a part in Sible Hedingham being given a Merit Award in the Best Kept Village competition in July 2013. We also gained fourth place in the Village of the Year competition in recognition of our community activities - a very gratifying result.

The Localism Act provides a means whereby communities could identify and preserve land or buildings deemed to be of local value. Sixteen such areas exist within Braintree District Council, two of which are in Sible Hedingham. They are:

The Village Club, Crosspath

This had been run under the auspices of the Bocking United Social Club for the last few years but had been losing money and Bocking were no longer prepared to subsidise it. Sible Hedingham Parish Councillors became involved in June 2013, offering support to those members who were prepared to keep the club alive on a voluntary (but temporary) basis. It was feared that the club might be sold and either demolished or transformed into something other than a local club and SHPC therefore applied to have it entered onto the Register of Community Assets. This meant that, should it be offered for sale, the Parish Council would have an opportunity to bid for it. In the event, it **was** put up for sale, councillors met the prospective new owner and decided that its future was likely to be secure and did not therefore exercise their right to purchase. It is now being run once again as a village club and we wish Tracy and Derek Ashmeade success in their new venture. It does, however remain on the register for five years.

Open Space and Play Area at Parkfields

This is land owned by Greenfields Community Housing who admit that owning and administering play equipment is not generally part of their remit. SHPC have offered to take over the freehold, but in the meantime have placed the area on the Register to ensure its future for the community. If the Parish Council gains control, it will consult residents as to the future use of this area.

In the year ahead the Council will continue to work with the community and engage with all sectors as much as possible, including the Youth Services who face a difficult time in the light of funding cuts from Essex County Council. Assistance may be offered to other local groups possibly struggling in these difficult times. A small sum of money has been set aside for help with meeting fees at the Village Hall, thus, we hope, giving direct support to local groups while at the same time supporting the Village Hall Committee.

Gill Massey

