



W E S T B E R G H O L T P A R I S H C O U N C I L

# ANNUAL REPORT 2010

## Contents:

1. Minutes of 2009 Annual Parish meeting
2. A Message from the Chairman
3. Committee reports:
  - a. Land & Recreation
  - b. Halls
  - c. Planning
  - d. Parish Plan
  - e. Finance

**Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting  
Held in the John Lampon Hall  
Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2009 – 7.30p.m.**

**In the Chair:** John Gili-Ross

**Members Present:** Sally Butcher, Jenny Church, Bernard Colbron, Andrew Savage, David Short, Peter Sleight, Chris Stevenson, Bob Tyrrell

**Clerk:** Val Walsom

**Present:** Sergeant Mike Lee and PCSO Sue Donaldson from Copford Police Station,  
5 members of the public

**Apologies:** Sue Day and Harry Stone

Reports from the committees and the minutes of last year's Annual Parish Meeting were distributed in a booklet.

Before the meeting started refreshments were served.

**1. Welcome and introduction from the Chairman—Mr John Gili-Ross**

John Gili-Ross welcomed all. He explained that this had been a very good year for the Parish Council, winning the Best Kept Village Competition. The formation of the Bergholt Youth Group (BYG) was a big influence towards the result. He thanked the many residents of West Bergholt who had contributed to making the village so successful in the competition.

Thanks went to Parish Council employees, Val Walsom, June Mayhew and Gary Walls.

**2. Mike Lee, Sergeant at Copford Police Station to discuss policing issues**

Sergeant Lee spoke about his role and the role of Copford Police Station. The Police are trying to improve contact with communities and a website is available for information. Staffing has increased from one Police Constable to five and Sergeant Lee is pushing for an additional PC. Vicky Sanders is currently the neighbourhood specialist.

152 crimes were reported in 2008 and so far there have been 33 reported in 2009. These crimes are mainly garden and shed thefts so it is advisable to keep things locked away securely, and anti social behaviour and domestic incidents. On average there are 9 crimes per month reported which has reduced from 10 ½.

Sergeant Lee advised that we should be vigilant and get to know our neighbours particularly as Neighbourhood Watch has stopped working.

Thefts from motor vehicles for items such as SatNavs are common. All such portable items should be removed from vehicles.

£5000 has been secured for extra policing but this is to be shared between 16 villages. It is hoped that in the future 1 PCSO will be secured to cover West Bergholt and Eight Ash Green specifically.

Chris Stevenson asked whether Dedham, who currently pays for local policing, gets more for its money.

Sergeant Lee advised that generally their crime levels are lower. There is a perception that Dedham residents are happy with what they get for their money.

A resident asked if there was a plan to site a VAS in Colchester Road.

John Gili-Ross advised that the budget had been spent for this year. Essex Highways, who fund the equipment, have the final say in where they will be sited.

Sergeant Lee advised that the Police are awaiting the results of checks for speeding carried out on Colchester Road.

Bernard Colbron would like items for the Village Bulletin from the Police.

Sergeant Lee advised that this would be possible.

### **3a) Discussion on issues sent in by residents**

A resident requested the siting of a waste bin in the bus shelter on Chapel Road. This will be considered by the Environment committee.

### **3b) Any issues raised from the floor**

Issue: There is still a problem of dogs fouling on Poors Land.

Response: John Gili-Ross advised that it is an offence to walk dogs without the correct means to clear up after them. The Environment committee will consider this problem and how best to deal with it at its next meeting.

### **4. Concluding remarks**

John Gili-Ross thanked those members of the public who had attended the meeting.

The meeting finished at 8.30p.m.

## A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN - JOHN GILI-ROSS

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the West Bergholt Annual Parish Meeting.

I have always believed that the future of our village lies in the younger members of the community and the Parish Council has fully supported this principle and built upon the sound foundations underpinning the Bergholt Youth Group (BYG). The winning of the Colchester Youth Awards by two of the youth leaders reinforces this point and it is hoped that 2010 will see continued progress towards youth representation on one of the Parish Council's sub-committees.

During the last year several actions identified through the Parish Plan have been brought to fruition and the working party continues to develop new initiatives to meet the outstanding aims set out within the Plan. Our Parish Plan reflects the views and aspirations of residents and acts as a strategic pointer for our community to work towards in the years to come. It remains a living document and during the year a sub-committee was formed to develop a Village Design Statement that will be agreed with Colchester Borough Council Planning group. The VDS will form our strategic intent with respect to planning and village development forming a yardstick for acceptable development in the village.

You will read of the activities and achievements made by the Parish Council sub committees working on behalf of the village during the last year. Whilst meeting formally on almost a monthly basis, members also donate many hours of their free time addressing day to day issues and activities to achieve greater efficiency and easier decision making by the Parish Council as a whole.

Your Parish Councillors are very aware of the trust placed in them by residents to spend public money correctly and wisely. Evaluating new or replacement items and services together with relevant value for money suppliers is a very time consuming activity. Parish Councillors continue to undertake this responsibility, often without thanks, driven only by a desire to do what is best for the village.

We continue to review projects that will help improve and enhance the community whilst remaining within available budgets. The Orpen Hall was the source of grant funding during the year and new doors, soffits and guttering were fitted. Unfortunately, grant funding was not available to replace the windows of the Orpen Hall and Social Club however, it is expected this project will be financially possible in 2010/2011. It is hoped that grants will be made available for improvements to the village broadband service as discussions with BT Openreach indicate they currently have no plans to improving their local infrastructure in the near future.

I would like to convey my personal thanks to all the members of the Parish Council for their commitment, dedication and professionalism. It is an honour to have been Chairman for the last year, a role much simplified by the hard work and support of my fellow Parish Councillors.

Particular thanks go to our Clerk, Val Walsom for ensuring the affairs of the Parish are kept in order and that it operates efficiently. My thanks go to our council support staff, in particular June Mayhew the Halls Administrator and Gary Walls the village handyman.

Special thanks go to those who also make our village a special place in which to live including, our Village Bulletin team, members of the Parish Plan and the Village Design sub groups.

## REPORTS FROM THE COMMITTEES

### LAND AND RECREATION COMMITTEE REPORT - David Short

ALLOTMENTS - It has been another good year for the allotments. Clearing the last remaining scrub area has created three more plots. All plots have been numbered and the details of plot holders stored on a database. This has enabled invoices to be issued by the Parish Clerk and so rents are now paid direct rather than on a designated Saturday morning at the Orpen Hall. This operation has proved to be successful as nearly forty plot holders did attend a Sunday morning site meeting in early February instead. All plots are now recorded in 5 rod lots giving 139 on the whole site and new plot holders being allocated one plot. A few plot holders have decided not to continue so the waiting list has been removed and two plots are now available. The income from a full site is now over £1000 a year and, as the site is now in good order, this more than exceeds annual expenditure.

VILLAGE GREEN - The Village Green was cleared of brambles and bracken and was largely returned to its original Heathlands state. Work is ongoing to clear the remaining brambles etc. utilising the services of the Community Service personnel. This will continue into the indefinite future so that the heath can be maintained throughout the year.

POORS LAND - The football pitch was largely re-turfed at the beginning of the season and it is intended to re-seed the area annually in future in order to save on the high cost of re-turfing. With regard to the hedges around Poors Land, they will be cut again at the appropriate time this year together with other hedges the Parish Council is responsible for. Bill King has indicated that he should be able to carry out the work again this year using his tractor followed by the street sweeper as in previous years.

QUEEN'S HEAD, HALL ROAD AND LEXDEN ROAD PONDS - Clearance of the reed mace from the ponds is to be undertaken in September by BCT volunteers and the debris will be removed by a local contractor which will minimise the costs of the project.

VILLAGE MAINTENANCE - During the year the village was plagued by an epidemic of graffiti spraying and theft of household rubbish and consequent fly tipping. These blemishes were promptly removed by our handymen Gary and Robert who both continue to do excellent work in keeping the village clean and tidy. It is interesting to note that incidents of this nature seem to have abated following the intervention of the Police who mounted an all night surveillance in order to establish who the culprits were. Disturbing evidence of drug usage in the village has been found on several occasions and any incidents of this nature should be reported to the police. Finally, Gary and Robert will commence their grass cutting schedule very shortly.

### HALLS REPORT - Bernard Colbron

The last year has been one of catch-up and repair. The upgrade of the Orpen Hall has started. Doors, roof guttering and down pipes have been replaced. Guttering and down pipes were of the original building materials and, with the help of people climbing onto the roof, they were in a very poor state. The windows are next on the list and the Parish Council has applied for grants for this next phase.

There had been mention from various hirers that the Halls were not up to expected standards. We embarked on a refurbishment programme to put right the problems. The last project was put in place at the beginning of April. A number of people have noticed these improvements and approved of the

outcome. At our last meeting the Hall sub-committee discussed various ways to take our improvement standards forward. It was agreed that the entrance to the Orpen Hall be redecorated and wall corners be protected. There will also be some minor repairs to the fabric of the Hall.

Late last year it was noticed that the boiler house chimney had moved. It was surveyed and deemed to be in a dangerous condition. It was quickly removed and roof slates replaced to cover the hole. We are in discussion with our insurers to cover the cost of this work together with damage caused to a wall in the kitchen by the movement.

During the winter the Social Club boiler decided to stop working. This took two visits by an engineer to put right. Minor problems always occur which have to be put right. These included the refurbishment of the black safety curtains on the stage, various replacements in the toilets and re-surfacing the passageway between the Orpen and John Lampon Halls. This last item was due to movement of concrete covering hot water pipes. A new cooker was purchased to replace the old one. It was noticed that the Orpen Hall had a leak where water ran off the roof. The valley between the two roofs was inspected and it was discovered that the felt was damaged. A contractor will supply us with a quote to replace it. It is hoped that this work will take place during the summer holidays.

My thanks to the members of the Halls sub-committee, to June Mayhew, the Halls administrator, and to Gary Walls, the Parish Handyman, who has helped with the maintenance work,

The new Parish year will see the committee renamed as the Premises and Recreation Committee. This is to reflect the duties that are undertaken.

## **PLANNING REPORT - Bob Tyrrell**

The role on the West Bergholt Planning Committee is one of consultation. Applications sent by Colchester Borough Council vary from a front porch to the larger developments in the village. As the Planning Committee, we do not make decisions, we only make recommendation to CBC based on our local knowledge. We aim to have a balanced view and act in the best interests of all the village.

This year has been exceptionally quiet due to the recession. We have only been asked to comment on 43 applications, which is some 20% less than last year.

The PC made the following recommendation:

No comments	27	of which	19 Approved,	2 refused,	5 no decision as yet
Expressed concern	14	of which	7 Approved,	3 refused,	2 withdrawn,
No decision as yet.	2				

### **Applications**

Essex County Council - Colchester Skip Hire application for a large recycling depot in Wormingford was refused. This would have led to an increase of skip lorries through the village.

Colchester Borough Council - Refused an application for the change of use of the Barns at Hill House Farm to a Trampoline Centre for the disabled, as being out of keeping and against policy.

### **Village Design Statement**

Parish councillors and member of the Village Plan group have spent most of the year researching the VDS to compliment the Village Plan which has now been adopted by CBC as Supplementary Planning Guidance. The final Draft is available tonight and will be published on the Parish Council website.

The Planning Committee has regular meetings on the third Wednesday of each month at 7.30p.m. in the small committee room at the Orpen Hall. Anyone who wishes to express their views on any planning application is welcome to come along.

## **PARISH PLAN REPORT - Chris Stevenson**

### **1 Introduction**

The Parish Plan was prepared between 2006 and 2008 and was published in September 2008. It has been adopted by the Parish Council as forming the forward plan of concerns and activities that the village community wants to see addressed or carried out. The plan is available to view on the village website: [www.westbergholt.net](http://www.westbergholt.net).

The plan is overseen by a Steering Group whose current members appear above. The membership waxes and wanes, but is never less than 7 strong. It is a requirement that at least one member of the steering group is also a Parish Councillor. Presently 3 members of the steering group also serve as Parish Councillors.

There are eight areas of the Parish Plan and each area has an action plan which has been assembled to summarise the activities which are to be carried out over the next few years. Some of the actions can be carried out by the Steering Group, some by village organisations or by the Parish Council. However many fall to other public bodies and so in this regard, the Steering Group acts as a lobby group.

### **2 Main Activities Carried Out**

The group has met virtually every month over the last year, and in addition many other meetings have been held to discuss individual ideas such as village policing and broadband. Summaries of the meetings have been reported monthly to the Parish Council. The following is a simple summary of activities:

- **Winter/Spring 2009:** Determining priority actions from the 50 items in the combined action plan; re-invigorating the Steering Group with new members; documenting successes to date.
- **Spring /Summer 2009:** main research into actions regarding transport; broadband; village policing; village design statement (VDS) and village tidiness
- **Summer/Autumn 2009:** reporting on options for village policing and broadband; holding a VDS workshop and drafting section of the VDS
- **Autumn/Winter 2009:** organising activities to take policing, VDS and broadband forward as serious proposals.

The main medium of disseminating the plan's progress has been the quarterly Village Bulletin with update items appearing in all issues. Items are reported to the monthly Parish Council meeting.

As well as the Bulletin the Parish plan web page has been updated and summaries of the plan's progress together with other information relating to the plan have been included.

### **3 Main Findings**

#### **SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY**

The BYG and improved opening hours of the MUGA, which were both identified during the production of the Parish Plan, have gone from strength to strength. The BYG attracts tens of youngsters and has a full programme of activities. Its youth leaders received local Colchester-wide recognition for their efforts in leading the group. The extended operation of the MUGA has been a success with BYG attendees regularly using the facility.

The website has also been strengthened and expanded over the past year and now

contains extensive information about what's going on in the village including the activities of clubs and societies.

#### **ENVIRONMENT**

Steering Group members organised the village's participation in the "Big Tidy Up" and numerous people helped to collect rubbish from around the village. This supplements the ongoing work to keep the village free from litter by the village handymen.

#### **PUBLIC AMEMNITIES**

The provision of Broadband and the speed of the service were researched and meetings held with service providers. As a result of this, a survey of likely demand for high speed broadband was conducted, and due to the potentially strong support a sub-committee has been formed to take the project forward.

#### **HOUSING AND PLANNING**

Concern about "cramming", "backland development" and design issues are frequent issues raised by the community. To respond to this a sub-committee has been assembled to produce a Village Design Statement. The VDS will be published in 2010.

#### **COMMUNITY SAFETY AND CRIME**

Concern about the level of visible policing in the village and levels of crime sparked off a series of discussions with the police, and a report was tabled at the Parish Council meeting last year. A number of resolutions have been supported to improve levels of police interaction and to promote awareness about levels of crime and their reporting and documentation.

#### **TRANSPORT**

Three actions have been completed or at least commenced. Public transport information has been included on our village website; research into a village minibus conducted and a bid to Essex County Council for traffic calming and speed reduction facilities submitted.

#### **DEMOCRACY**

The Parish Council in addition to adopting the plan has redefined its committees, and these are all now able to take on board Parish Plan actions although progress will be dependent mainly upon resourcing and priorities.

### **5 Next Steps**

The main outputs going forward from this year's work will undoubtedly be the pursuit of a high speed broadband service and the publication of the Village Design Statement. It is intended to refresh the priorities for the remainder of 2010 and 2011 such that further progress can be made on environmental and transport matters.

### **6 Chairman's Conclusions**

As Chairman of the Steering Group I am indebted to the help and support given to me by my fellow Steering Group members. Their unstinting enthusiasm makes the whole process of overseeing the plan's progress a pleasure to oversee, and I am indebted to them all.

#### **Steering Group Members:**

Catherine Bailey, Jenny Church, John Ford, Murray Harlow, Gunter Klaphake (Secretary), Victoria Power (Treasurer), Chris Stevenson (Chair), Harry Stone and Chris Young



## FINANCE REPORT - Andrew Savage

I am pleased to announce that the Audit Commission 'signed off' the 2008/09 accounts last August. My thanks therefore go to Val Walsom for all the work she has undertaken, and to Ann Hallam for her (unpaid) Internal Auditor duties.

The accounts for the following year, ending March 2010, are currently being prepared and the pre-audited figures can be summed up as follows:

The Parish Council's General Accounts show an income for the year of nearly £46,000 as against an expenditure of just over £36,600. Mainly, the difference is as a result of the Colchester Borough Council and Essex County Council grant application timetable being extended and slipping into the following financial year. This means that the amount earmarked to 'match fund' the proposed project of providing new windows to the Orpen Hall was no longer required during this financial period.

The Orpen Memorial Hall Accounts show an income of over £32,300. Whilst the amount from lettings is similar to the previous year, the total figure is slightly less, mainly as a result of difficulties experienced by the Social Club. The expenditure has been restricted to just over £25,000 to allow the Public Works Loan annual payment (of £5368.26 for the John Lampon Hall) to be paid from this account.

Moving forward to this year's finances, the Village precept has been raised only by a small amount compared to the previous year. This still enables us, among other things, to finance a doubling of 'Village Caretaker' hours, contribute towards the production of the 'Village Design Statement' and still be able to help finance future projects.