

Terling and Fairstead Parish Council - Chairman's Report – May 2009

This Annual Report by the Chairman represents a summary some of the work and achievements of Terling and Fairstead Parish Council during the past twelve months. It is not an exhaustive list but it is hoped that no important information is omitted.

Apart from attendance at the monthly meetings members of this Council attend a great many meetings relevant to the community in which we live. When and where appropriate they voice local feelings, trying to obtain the best possible outcome for the residents in the Parish.

A public forum is held at the start of every Parish Council Meeting giving members of the community an opportunity to speak and to question Councillors. Many issues are raised during this forum. Trying to resolve these issues is not always easy as Parish Councils have very little statutory power but achievement is usually made through communication with the responsible authority.

This past year we have seen the appointment of a new Clerk following the retirement of Sue Stewart who stepped down in January after eight years. I would like to record my thanks for the work undertaken during her time as Clerk and for the continued support offered to her replacement, Jayne Halfhide. Jayne has very quickly settled into the post and I would like to thank her for her help and guidance.

We work closely with our Community Warden and with our Essex Police Neighbourhood Specialist Officer, both of whom regularly attend Parish Council meetings.

We continue to hold two Cluster Group Meetings a year with Hatfield Peverel Parish Council when we meet with Officers of the District Council to discuss a variety of issues relating to the area.

The Village Handyman continues his work around the Parish and keeps everything in pristine condition, reporting any matters of concern. He picks up litter, empties bins, cuts grass, tidies hedgerows, repairs and paints notice boards and benches, cleans signposts, removes graffiti and a whole host of other jobs too numerous to list here. Thank you, Clive, for all that you do.

An important part of his work involves weekly playground inspections and we are constantly looking at ways to improve the safety and the facilities in the playground. We ensure ROSPA carry out annual safety checks of the playground. In the winter we employed an expert to eradicate moles which were causing considerable mess.

We continue to hold regular community litter picks throughout the Parish and would like to thank those committed families who take part, come rain or shine.

This year has seen the most severe weather for 40 years and this has taken its toll on many roads. We have been working hard with ECC Highways campaigning for roads to be resurfaced and potholes to be repaired.

Missing or broken road signs, flooding, fly-tipping, abandoned vehicles and a plethora of other matters are reported to the relevant authorities and our Clerk does her best to ensure a speedy response. We regularly check salt bins and recycling banks and report to the Council when they need to take action.

Our Environmental & Footpaths sub-committee worked hard to set up the arrangement with the Parish Paths Partnership scheme run by Essex County Council and we will be using our Handyman and the tractor for more hours to keep our footpaths tidy and clear in the coming year. Ground works have now commenced for the long awaited bus shelter at Gambles Green.

We have expressed our concerns about the worsening conditions of the gabion walls at Terling Ford and after months of work behind the scenes we now have a commitment from ECC Highways who are about to repair the walls.

The Parish Council have fully supported The Village Design Statement and will continue to do so. Several areas of concern were highlighted in the questionnaire completed by members of the community and the Parish Council has undertaken to consider these and act where possible.

Four old BT Telephone Kiosks were adopted by the Parish Council this year and we plan, with the help of volunteers, to maintain them and keep them in good order for the community. A computer course was arranged in February, attended by ten parishioners, which had a very positive feedback. We update the Parish Council's website regularly and are continually looking at ways to improve it.

Our Finance sub-committee meet regularly to ensure that financial issues are tightly controlled. All expenditure is approved at full council. Maurice Howard, our internal auditor highlighted areas which needed improving at the last audit and I am pleased to report that we have implemented his recommendations.

The Planning sub-committee regularly visit sites in the Parish reporting back to the District Council with recommendations or comments on applications. Our Estate Liaison Officers work closely with Lord Rayleigh's Farm managers to pass on any concerns and resolve any issues which may arise.

Lastly, but by no means least, a veteran tree hunt was run with Terling school children which was greatly enjoyed by all those who took part.

This only leaves me to thank all Parish Councillors who have served the Council during the last year, giving their time and knowledge freely for the benefit of the community and my thanks to all members of the council for supporting me in my year as Chairman.

Sarah McNamara
Chairman
Terling and Fairstead Parish Council
13th May 2009