

Kelvedon Parish Council



Annual Report 2019/20



Chairman's Report

Introduction

2019/20 has been another exceedingly busy year for Kelvedon Parish Council. Given that the responsibilities of the Council have been progressively increasing, we requested an extra councillor from Braintree District Council just before the election last year. This means that we are able to stay up to date on more issues and can have a greater depth of knowledge regarding matters such as planning and highways policies and we now have a total of 12 councillors. We've been particularly busy with imminent housing development plans, campaigning against potential closure of our library and the ongoing issue of the potential incinerator at Rivenhall.

Kelvedon Parish Council 'Birthday Tea'

December 2019 was the 125th anniversary of the creation of Kelvedon Parish Council. Therefore, in order to celebrate our 'birthday', this year's Annual Parish Assembly will take the format of a birthday afternoon tea. It will be held at the Institute on Sunday 29th March, from 2 – 4pm and we hope you will be able to join us for this special celebration.

Neighbourhood Plan

Following on from the Neighbourhood Plan consultation in 2018, the draft Neighbourhood Plan for Kelvedon passed through the stage known as Regulation 14. We are currently working on some amendments that are required before we send the documents to Braintree District Council to pass the stage known as Regulation 15. Braintree District Council will analyse the Plan to check that it is sound, as far as they are concerned. Once the Plan passes successfully through Regulation 15, it will proceed to Regulation 16, which is a referendum for the residents of Kelvedon to decide whether or not the Plan should be adopted.

It has taken a huge amount of effort on the part of a relatively small number of volunteers to produce the Neighbourhood Plan and I'd like to extend my heartfelt thanks for all of their hard work so far. With the help of some professional advisors, we hope to be able to present the draft Plan to Braintree District Council in the near future.

A12/A120 Upgrades

You might remember that there was an A12 consultation in Autumn 2019 in order to gauge public opinion on four potential routes for the new A12, should West Tey be given the green light. Our comment was that each of the options had its drawbacks, but that option C was the 'least worst' alternative from Kelvedon's point of view. We will have to wait for the Planning Inspector's report on whether the

garden communities are viable or not before the final route of the new A12 between Junction 19 at Boreham and Marks Tey/Copford is announced.

Although the preferred route for the new stretch of the A120 was announced in summer 2018, funding hasn't yet been announced.

There is also an issue with both the A12 and A120 realignments needing to be dove-tailed, in order that they can join together in a sensible manner. Currently, the proposal is that this would result in a large junction just north of Kelvedon, potentially with four lanes initially on the A12 stretch, as the A120 traffic would need space to merge. In our response to this idea, Kelvedon Parish Council are keen to see the junction built as far from the village as possible and, ideally, would like there to be no access to the A12/A120 from London Road. This should significantly reduce the amount of through traffic that currently impacts the High Street and should make it much easier to move around the village, especially for pedestrians.

Planning/Development

As you may be aware, there is still no Local Plan in place for Braintree District Council. The upshot of this is that, as they cannot currently prove a 5 year housing supply, the District is unable to effectively defend itself against speculative developments. This means that, in the absence of a Local Plan, Kelvedon cannot ensure that only around 300 new homes are built in the next few years (this being the number of houses originally allocated to Kelvedon).

CALA Homes have acquired the site West of Kelvedon Station (Monks Farm) and have held a consultation in the village and also had a preliminary meeting with the Parish Council at the end of 2018. These opportunities have been very useful in order for the Parish Council to represent our residents and to do our best to ensure that the needs and desires of the residents, as compiled into the draft Neighbourhood Plan, are observed by the developer.

The site opposite Monks Farm, Watering Farm, has been granted outline planning permission for 35 homes, but has not been sold to a developer at this stage.

Another site that has been put forward to Braintree District Council is at London Road, which would not only comprise housing, but also some retail, industrial, early years and elderly care provision as well as a purpose built GP hub. This hub would also include an administration centre for the company that runs the Kelvedon and Feering Health Centre. Kelvedon Parish Council have had a preliminary meeting with the group hoping to develop this site, ahead of outline planning permission being applied for. Again, we have used this opportunity to seek assurances that the requirements of the residents of Kelvedon are strongly borne in mind by the developer.

Towards the end of 2019, a further development has been proposed, on the Deal's site next to Kelvedon Station. The Parish Council have had a preliminary meeting with the developer, in advance of their pre-application meeting with Braintree District Council, where we raised concerns regarding maintaining a good level of station parking, as well as providing adequate parking for residents of the new development.

You may also have seen a proposal that has been put forward to Braintree District Council for a garden community adjacent to our village, known as King's Dene. The Parish Council have not made any comments on this proposal, as it has not yet been put forward through the Planning or Local Plan (Sustainability Appraisal) processes and therefore it would be premature for us to do so. We are, however, very well aware of the implications of this development, were it to be approved to enter the Planning or Local Plan processes, and we would follow its progress closely, ensuring that we provide a robust response on behalf of our residents, once it is appropriate.

At the time of writing, the Planning Inspector is holding his investigation into the proposals by Braintree District Council for the development of garden communities, such as West Tey. We will await his decision on whether Section 1 of Braintree's Local Plan, which puts forward the garden communities, should be approved. In any case, we will continue to push for Section 2 of the Local Plan to be adopted as soon as possible – which would limit the number of homes that can be built in the District until 2033.

Library Status

Hopefully you will have seen, thanks to a tremendous amount of campaigning across the county, that Essex Libraries have decided that they will not close any libraries for the next four to five years and will then reassess the situation.

The local working party continues to meet, to keep abreast of any developments from Essex Libraries. Although we are currently safe from closure, it's important to ensure that we look at all options for the future operation of the Kelvedon Library, or we may find ourselves facing closure again in a few years.

Our thanks to everyone who has helped with campaigning, in order to have secured this U-turn in policy from Essex County Council, and to the many residents who have offered their assistance should the library need to be staffed by volunteers.

ECC Devolution Pilot

Kelvedon Parish Council is one of a small number of councils across Essex that have been chosen to take part in a pilot scheme aiming to 'devolve' some of Essex's current responsibilities regarding footpath maintenance etc. We're hoping

that this will mean that the Parish Council are much better able to deal with queries and complaints from residents regarding maintenance of public footpaths and rights of way around the village, rather than having the frustration of having to refer all of these issues to the County Council to handle. We'll be given a small sum for undertaking this work, but the main reason for taking part in the pilot is to, hopefully, provide a much better service for our local residents. So far, we feel it's been a positive step for our community.

Parish Amenity Maintenance Warden

We're sorry to say that Lewis Hunt has moved on to pastures new and is no longer Kelvedon's PAMW. We'd like to extend our thanks for all of his hard work and wish him all the best for the future. We have looked at the various options for how we can most effectively provide these services and have decided to move to working with contractors for our day to day maintenance of the village, with the larger mowing and vegetation maintenance continuing to be provided by our current contractors. As such, we will not have someone on site every week day, but any problems or issues will be scheduled in to be worked on at the next opportunity. If you do see anything which needs our attention, please report it directly to the parish office - preferably by email or by leaving a message on our answerphone.

Special Constables

As a response to a seemingly higher than usual amount of crime in 2018, we investigated the possibility of employing special constables for the village. The feedback from residents that we received at last year's Annual Parish Assembly was overwhelmingly in favour of recruiting special constables for Kelvedon.

We are delighted to announce that Kelvedon's first special constable, Graeme Braby, has commenced patrols in the village from December 2019. He will be accompanied by one or more independent special constables from Witham and elsewhere in Braintree district, until he has completed his training. The reports that we have received so far from Graeme have been very positive, with residents pleased to have regular contact with a special constable in order to raise issues of local concern. Amongst other concerns, he will be keeping a particular eye on antisocial behaviour and vehicles speeding through the village.

IWMF

At the time of writing this report, the Environment Agency have released a statement to say that they are minded to grant a permit for the incinerator to be built with a 35m stack – this would mean the largest incinerator in the country would be built with the shortest stack in the country. Following many concerns regarding pollution and especially the particles containing heavy metals being released so close to ground level, the Parish Council have submitted an objection

to the permit being granted. We are currently awaiting the Environment Agency's decision, but remain hopeful of a positive outcome, given the dedication of local campaign groups, objections from Parish Councils and the intervention of our local MP.

Future Projects

The Parish Council have some exciting projects in mind for the longer term, including an upgrade of the Rec and possibly the Village Green and amenity space at Kingfisher Way, if there's enough support for it. We're very keen that our beautiful village is made even more attractive, for the benefit of those who live here. To this end, we've asked for some initial concept designs to be drawn up, which you'll be able to see and comment on at the Annual Parish Assembly on Sunday 29th March. Once we've had time to consider all of the comments and consult any other parties that may have an interest in these areas, we can proceed with any upgrades once the funds become available.

Conclusion

Kelvedon Parish Council is currently extremely busy in managing all of the issues that I've listed above, as well as maintaining the village as usual and ensuring that we are as accessible and relevant to our community as possible. We are juggling many tasks, with the expert assistance of our Clerk, Pippa and assistant Sue, who provide invaluable support for the councillors. With so much going on locally and so many pressing concerns for our residents, it has been a challenging and very busy year for me as Chairman. However, it has also been a great privilege for me and for all of the other councillors to serve you and to ensure that Kelvedon is the best village that it can be. We look forward to seeing you at the 'Birthday Tea' on Sunday 29th March. **Cllr India Jayatillake**

Clerk's Report

Finance - as at 31 January 2020:

Current Account	£18,773
Deposit Account	£2,773
Building Society Account	£79,759
CCLA Investment	£200,000

The bulk of the monies held with the Building Society, and the investment with CCLA, are reserves, both general and earmarked, mainly for longer term projects such as the improvements to the Recreation Ground, playgrounds and the Pavilion.

From April, the Parish Council's section of the Council Tax (known as the Precept) will show a small increase to a Band D property's payment, of around 5.5% on the previous year, but which in monetary terms equates to 9p per week. This goes directly to the parish and includes all of the day to day street cleaning, bin emptying and grass cutting work, as well as the larger maintenance issues on the playgrounds, Pavilion and open spaces around the village.

Costs for routine things such as equipment and van servicing, insurance, business rates and the ongoing costs of providing the High Street car park, are all increasing, typically at around the rate of 3 – 5% on last year's bills.

Ongoing Work and Projects

Requirements for the maintenance and upkeep of trees, ditches and hedges are increasing, as annual surveys (rather than 3 yearly) are now routinely required by insurance companies. We endeavour to rectify any issues as soon as is practical, depending on the time of year and the weather, and some tree work will be taking place on the Recreation Ground, Brockwell Meadow, and the Green, before the beginning of March, to ensure that the most urgent work is completed before the start of the nesting and breeding seasons. We will unfortunately be felling a few trees in various places, which have become too dangerous to save. Two of these are the horse chestnuts which flank the path at the bottom of the Recreation Ground, near the zip wire. As this area has a high amount of pedestrian traffic, we are not able to let these deteriorate any further. We will therefore be looking to plant replacement trees either here or elsewhere on the site, over the next winter.

Our biggest project this year will be some extensive work being undertaken at Brockwell Meadows, which will include restoration and re-profiling works being carried out to the pond, and selected ditch sections. This will involve the clearance of some vegetation and silt, and also the pollarding of selected willow trees. In order to perform these tasks effectively the Parish Council will need to use a digger and other equipment, such as chain saws, on site. Please be rest assured that these works are being carried out as a result of detailed discussions with both the Environment Agency and Essex Wildlife Trust. We will also be keeping the welfare of both flora and fauna at the site uppermost.

At Brockwell, we have also started to plant black poplar trees along the edge of the cut meadow. These trees should do very well here as the wet environment is where they are best suited. Further trees will be planted as the seasons go on.

Other improvements will include an upgrade to the surface of Footpath 14, along the stretch which goes around the school field and out past the path to Kingfisher Way, where it is very wet and muddy.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Parish Councillors, on Kelvedon's behalf, for all their hard work and endeavours (which is voluntary).

Keeping up to speed with the continual bombardment of consultations, planning issues and responses which are required to a myriad of different things is not easy. These often arrive in twos or threes with short deadlines, and take a considerable amount of time for Councillors to read and digest, to enable them to represent the views of the parish on each issue. I would also like to thank Sue Green, who keeps me on task extremely competently and furnishes me with her extensive knowledge of parish issues, past and present. Altogether, they really are a marvellous bunch of people and I am very proud to be working with them.

Philippa Potter, Clerk



www.kelvedon.org.uk

info@kelvedon.org.uk



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The Old Bank | 63 High Street | Kelvedon | CO5 9AE | 01376 570285