

SHOTLEY PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

July 2017

Congratulations!

The Parish Council is very pleased to announce that one of our youngest parishioners, Miss Evie Giddings from Shotley Gate, has won the Annual Schools Litter Awareness Poster Competition run by Babergh District Council. Well done Evie!

UK Power Networks update

Thanks to a combined effort between UK Power Networks, the Parish Council and SCC Highways, Church Walk had been cleared of overgrowth just in time for the recent road closure. The Parish Council would like to thank Mr Mark Cordle for a fantastic job well done and in the nick of time!

The boring under the Orwell River has been completed and works have just about finished on Old Hall Hill. Works would continue on the main road at a rate of 300m at a time.

The planning applications for the two chalk pads needed for the storage of the soil extracted during the process have been submitted to Babergh DC. If successful, this would enable UK Power Networks to store the soil for a period of up to 12 months at Mr R Wrinch's farm rather than have to transport it out of the Peninsula. This would not only be very costly but would also have a significant impact on the traffic on the B1456 and the environment.

Cllr R Wrinch was thanked for his efforts in trying to find a solution to this problem and we await confirmation that planning permission would be granted.

Other Maintenance Works

The Parish Council agreed to fund the annual cutback of the overgrowth between Styngnam Cottages and Chapel Fields, with the help of Cllr R Wrinch's equipment and time. All that was needed now was formal permission from SCC Highways.

The Parish Council was also waiting for SCC Highways' formal approval for other works: the re-location of the Shotley sign (which would be re-painted first); the re-instatement of footpath access between Lower Harlings and Estuary Road; the cutting back of overgrowth at various points within the village, etc. As a statutory body, the Parish Council needed to have the appropriate permissions in order to act lawfully and be fully covered.

Fortunately, independent volunteer groups/persons did not have to follow such stringent controls, which meant they were able to react more quickly. A clear example of this has been the recent deployment of a number of volunteers by Shotley Open Spaces to help with cutting back the overgrowth on Bristol Hill, which the Parish Council and District Cllr D Davis had reported on a number of occasions. The Parish Council has thanked the volunteers for all their efforts.

Follow-up on Extraordinary meeting held 27 June 2017

With regards to the statement on the Shotley Open Spaces minutes of 18th May (motion to withdraw co-operation with the Parish Council), correspondence has since been received from Mr Gary Richens stating that "***the problems that SOS had with the SLA that SPC had agreed with Sodexo were resolved at your meeting... and therefore co-operation with SPC has not been withdrawn. If anyone has a view that SOS cooperation with SPC had been withdrawn they have been misinformed***".

Other issues also raised at the same meeting were dealt with under the confidential section of the meeting due to their legal nature.

Armistice Day Commemorations 2018

It was agreed that such a special date should be fully supported by the Parish Council and members who had lost relatives in the War felt particularly compelled to get involved.

Request for contribution of £800 towards the production of the new Shotley Explorer Guide

Local businesses were still to be approached with regards to making a contribution towards this publication which would, ultimately, benefit them as it could potentially encourage visitors to the village. The Parish Council could not afford or justify such a considerable contribution when funds were so restricted and the publication could still be available online free of charge. Further attempts would be made to secure external funding and a final decision would be reached at a later point.

Shotley Heritage Community Benefit Society Ltd (Shotley Pier Group)

The decision as to whether to accept the kind offer of one gratis share was deferred pending the receipt of legal advice. By owning a share, the Parish Council would be expected to declare a pecuniary interest on matters relating to the project that may come up for consideration at a later stage. This declaration of a collective interest would result in the inability to discuss or vote on this matter. Taking into account that members represent their parishioners' views at parish council meetings, this inability could be deemed inappropriate and undemocratic.

Parishioners' requests for the placement of memorial items along the waterfront

It had previously been agreed that items such as benches/seats would no longer be permitted, as the area had reached saturation point. There was also a concern that as the Parish Council did not own that stretch of land, it could not guarantee their longevity or security, which was particularly concerning due to the emotive nature of the items in question.

It had been suggested that a tree was planted instead, to which one particular resident has agreed.

Members discussed the possibility of a local land owner donating a strip of land which would be used solely for such memorial/remembrance gestures.

IN BRIEF:

Stour and Orwell Forum – The Clerk and Chair had attended the Stour and Orwell Forum 2017 on July 4th 2017. Interesting developments and initiatives were reported

PC Notice Boards – Unfortunately some of the PC notices/papers seem to have been removed from the notice boards by person/persons unknown. This is a concern as some notices are statutory and are required to be displayed. Members of the public were kindly asked not to remove items from the PC's glassed section.

Planning – The Clerk had attended a recent meeting of the Woolverstone PC which included a presentation by BDC on 5 year land (housing) supply issues and developers' approach to sites identified for possible development.

Gate Farm Road Caravan Park – A number of issues continue to be raised and District Cllr D Davis reported that he was following these up with the BDC Enforcement Team.

Publication of draft minutes prior to Council approval – Councillors agreed that faster updates and publications following a meeting may be helpful in keeping parishioners apprised of current affairs and factual information.

Funding – The Parish Council approved a donation of £50 towards the “Tiffers the Bus Shelter” launch party event in August.

ISSUES RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC DURING THE MEETING:

Diversity in Politics

Whilst giving their reports, District Cllr D Davis and County Cllr D Woods had alluded to the importance of having a more diverse Council (District/County). Currently, the majority representation was Conservative and made up of “*middle-aged white males with a second income*”. A parishioner had taken exception to this as they strongly believed that it should be the “*best person for the job*” regardless of their ethnicity, age, political views or social status and that the emphasis should not be in meeting diversity targets, nor should that be “forced down people throats” by some.

Speed of delivery

Matters reported to the Parish Council did not always appear to be responded to very swiftly: A parishioner had reported the overgrowth on Bristol Hill to the Parish Council on a number of occasions. However, when the Shotley Open Spaces (SOS) Group had been asked, they had been able to respond swiftly and had cleared the overgrowth.

The SOS Group and independent volunteers were externally unregulated and, as such, able to act within their own set parameters, unlike the Parish Council who rely on public funds to carry out its functions. This meant that the Parish Council had to adhere to strict legislation and was unable to carry out works on land owned by another party without their express permission, otherwise the expenditure would not only be potentially unlawful but works/persons carrying out work would not be insured.

Extraordinary Meeting of the Council

A meeting had been called in order to address statements within SOS Group Minutes of 18.05.2017. Disappointment was expressed at the way the Parish Council and its representatives had been misrepresented within the minutes when the Parish Council’s support for the SOS Group was evident and well documented.

Social Media

Posts about the Parish Council website. Concerns were raised regarding the accuracy and content of recent social media posts on this matter exchanged between some former parish councillors and perpetuated by the ensuing lack of clarification. This dialogue had taken place in a closed social media group and, in any event, the Parish Council does not engage in Social Media debates as this was not perceived to be a professional approach to answer parishioners’ queries. Up to this point, the Parish Council had not been approached by any individual with a request for further information on this matter. A brief explanation of the events leading to the decision was given to those present and anyone wishing to ask any questions, about this or any other PC matter was encouraged to contact the Parish Council directly via the proper channels of communication.

Posts about the Shotley Pier Project. It was clarified that the Parish Council had no involvement with this project when parishioners expressed their disappointment at the way matters had been handled by some people in full public view. It was felt that a more professional and dignified approach would have been preferable. The grand sum of £90,000 (made up of 50% public donations and 50% match funding) had been released to the Group that same day and the current owner had apparently agreed to assist with the difference in the sale price.

The Parish Council will meet again on **August 17th, September 21st, October 19th, November 16th and December 14th, at 7.15pm, at the Village Hall, Large Committee Room**. We look forward to seeing you there, but, in the meantime, if you have any questions or wish to find out more, please get in touch with your Parish Clerk or any of your Councillors.

Dina Bedwell