

Birdbrook
PARISH COUNCIL

Review of Birdbrook Parish Plan 2013/15



Development Plan Review
2013/15 and Development
Plan 2016/19

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Please Note:

It was intended to have a map of Birdbrook Parish, with the conservation area described but as yet no suitable copy has been found. As and when we find a copy it will be published in Birdbrook News in a format suitable to extract and place with this Plan.

The full results of the Survey will be published on Birdbrook parish Council website www.birdbrook.org.uk

Introduction

This document is a review of the Birdbrook Parish Plan 2013- 15 and will constitute the action plan for 2016 – 19.

A consultation took place in 2013 and this was the third such consultation since 2000 and each has been very similar in outcome and a further period of consultation with the local community will take place after 2019.

The Parish Council is seeking to involve parishioners in local activities and Councilors will be pleased to receive offers of assistance. A list of activities/actions will be detailed in the Birdbrook News later in the year 2016. ***Your Parish needs you!***

Prepared by Birdbrook Parish Council March 2016

Birdbrook Parish Plan Survey

Prepared By: Birdbrook Parish Plan Committee

March 2013

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Parish Plan Team was set up as a subcommittee of the Birdbrook Parish Council in January 2012 to develop a survey to establish the needs of the future for both the young and adult residents of the Birdbrook Parish.

The objective was to use the survey results as the basis to formulate a Parish Plan, which would encompass a set of objectives and actions for The Parish over the next five to ten years.

This Executive Summary seeks to provide recommended areas identified that will form directional indicators for the objectives and actions in the Parish Plan.

The survey was issued to 166 dwellings and produced a response rate of 35%

The cost to the Parish is approximately £1700 which has been largely funded by a grant of £1500 from the RCCE. To date the sums spent have totalled £900.

The survey questionnaire was split into six key areas, listed below and was issued in November 2012.

The subsequent results were analysed by an external, independent organisation and the following areas were identified as being of strategic importance.

A. Strategic Issues Identified

1. Environment

- Speeding vehicles through the Parish are widely seen as an issue.
- Road maintenance, road gritting and snow clearance, ditch maintenance and flooding are widespread problems throughout the Parish.

2. Leisure and Recreation

- The Church, Community House, The Plough and The Tavern Public houses are seen as important to the Community.

3. Housing and Development

- The majority of residents use oil as a fuel for heating their dwellings. The benefits associated with group oil buying schemes are seen as worthy of further investigation

4. Education and Employment

- There is some interest in adult education classes within the village, over a wide range of subjects.

5. Transport

- There is some need for Public Transport, with weekend travel to Haverhill being the most popular requirement.

6. Village Amenities and Services

- There is a small minority of people who need community support with welfare and health issues or consider themselves vulnerable and would welcome assistance in emergencies.

- Whilst the overwhelming majority of residents feel safe in the village and in their homes, over 70% of residents wanted to see a neighbourhood watch scheme. 35% said they would be willing to be a volunteer or coordinator.
- 88% of people use the internet at home with the majority dissatisfied with the speed of the technology.

B. Tactical Issues Identified

In addition to the above, there were a number of other areas that were identified as more tactical, and thus could be remedied more easily than strategic objectives.

Examples identified were:-

1. Tidy up and remove graffiti from bus stop.
2. Increase number of bins for dog mess and litter.
3. Tidy vegetation in the play area and improve evenness of ground in the sports pitch.
4. Ensure all street lighting is working effectively.

Recommendations

From the above findings the following recommendations are made

It is seen that the Parish Council could build greater working relationships between these commercial and non-commercial amenities to facilitate more activities and events that would benefit the whole community.

Summary of Opinions from the Birdbrook Survey November 2012

Birdbrook Parish Council set up a subcommittee in January 2012 to develop a survey to find out what the young and adult residents of Birdbrook would like to see for the future, to formulate a plan for the parish. This is a summary of the results. The full report from the survey can be seen on the Birdbrook Parish Council website <http://www.birdbrook.org.uk>

Youth Survey

14 young people from 10 families completed the questionnaire. Eight were in the 11-13 age group, and six in the 14-17 age group.

Our young residents said that

1. Lack of Transport is a problem for school, leisure and work.

2. Most valued the importance of the village green, village hall and countryside; and most of all high speed broadband
3. Spare time is spent mostly at home/friends houses; to a far lesser extent at the village play equipment/playingfield/generally around.
4. Litter and dog mess, speeding cars and personal safety were cited as problems, as well as little in the way of street lighting and bins
5. If provided in the village, over half said they would use a youth club, indoor and outdoor sports facilities and a shop; there was hardly any enthusiasm for dances and even less for a homework club.
6. They would prefer to access information about local groups mostly via the internet/Face book rather than the Birdbrook News, Noticeboards, text messages to their mobiles, and least of all Twitter.

For other new activities or improvements to existing facilities, they would like to see

Youth club, Youth bus, trips.

A shop

Improved village lighting, Christmas lights, firework night.

Football pitch

Maintenance of existing field (overgrown trees, waterlogged, uneven grass).

Less litter

More buses

Adult Survey

166 survey forms were delivered to residents of Birdbrook Parish. 59 questionnaires were returned from a total of 107 people. Persons within the same households often gave similar answers to each question.

Of the 105 who answered the question, 52 were male and 53 female. Only six were under 25. 54 work and/or work from home, and 36 are retired. Most live in Birdbrook village (55), Baythorne End (20) and New England (13) with a few in Station Road (4), Finkle Green (4) and other places (3).

Environment

66% considered street lighting sufficient and 56% agreed we should adopt the policy of turning lights off after set times, e.g. 1am to 6am.

Approximately 60% considered hedge cutting and tree pruning services adequate, yet road maintenance, gritting and snow clearing; ditch maintenance and surface water/flooding services inadequate. About 33% considered litter, and 48% fly tipping an issue.

About 36% were in favour and 63% against further expansion at Stansted Airport.

Residents are interested in receiving advice on some aspects of home heating and energy saving.

There was considerable support for a group oil buying scheme, also 53% were not aware of the Grant sources to finance energy saving schemes in the home.

Leisure and Recreation

Most agreed that the Community House is a valuable asset to the Parish and that we should have a plan in place to ensure that it is sustainable for the future.

Most would also like to see more activities/facilities in the village for children/young people. There were a lot of suggestions along the lines of: Youth club / meeting place, table tennis, games, tuck shop, football field, tennis court, and toddler group.

Over 80% regularly read the Birdbrook News, and said it was their preferred source of information about the Parish. Most wanted information about leisure and recreation, environment, community safety, housing and development, and some interest in information about education and employment.

Of those answering these questions 85% use the internet from home; 64% say the broadband speed is not sufficient for their needs, and 54% would be prepared to pay for faster broadband.

A lot of the villagers use the village pub, and some the Ladies Club, Birdbrook Club and coffee morning. The vast majority of these lived in Birdbrook Village. No villagers said they used the Bowls Club. Most (70-80%) said they believed events run by the clubs and organisations were important to the community.

There was support for more community events especially concerts, and meetings of community groups, but fewer for dances.

Around 60% were satisfied with the maintenance and sign-posting of rural footpaths (Public Rights of Way) around the Parish.

Most were not in favour of the Parish taking over services currently provided by the District Council such as hedge cutting, verge strimming, snow gritting, and street sweeping.

The vast majority (over 85%) agreed the church, community house, the pub, the village green, woodland, pond; and 67% that the Bowls Club are important to the quality of life in the community.

Only 21 of 70 residents would like community assets listed under the Localism Act.

53 of 98 residents considered traffic speed an issue and between them citing just about every junction and road in the parish as having problems with speeding traffic.

Housing and Development

There was some support for a small number of additional affordable, small houses in the village, and for a doctor's surgery, and limited support for retail/restaurant, and commercial/office.

Education and Employment

22 people said they use the mobile library in Birdbrook.

36 people expressed an interest in adult education classes and 30 nominated subjects they would be interested in which covered a huge range of subjects, the highest (6 to 8) numbers were interested in family/local/history; computer/IT; art and crafts, and languages.

44 residents said they would like to see more local (in village) employment opportunities, 43 said they would not. 46 thought there would be value the village having a local services guide to promote local enterprises.

Transport

Car or van is 95 residents' main means of transport with a few using a motorcycle/moped, bus, bicycle or walking.

Most found parking facilities adequate, with some problems highlighted in Birdbrook village and a few in New England, Baythorne End and Finkle Green.

Lack of public transport was a problem for around 10% for access to a post office, food shopping, medical facilities and leisure or recreation. 26 said they would definitely use a public or community transport service. The reasons, times and destinations for which they said they needed the service varied greatly.

However around 60% said they didn't need public transport and would not use it.

Village Amenities and Services

Three people said they do, 95 residents said they do not need community support or assistance with welfare or health issues. Seven said they consider themselves vulnerable and would welcome assistance in emergencies. In particular aids in home (e.g. personal alarm); collecting prescriptions, transport to doctor, and advice re state allowances and/or form filling.

Seven people said they feel themselves vulnerable, 95 said they don't.

Over 50% said they think something is needed in the place of the mobile Police office, and that they don't have confidence in our community policing team (now from Halstead station).

Over 97% of us feel safe in the village and in our homes. 70% would like a neighbourhood watch scheme, but only 36% said they were prepared to be a neighbourhood watch volunteer or coordinator.

65 said they understood the role of Parish Council and Councillors, 33 that they did not. 55 said we do not need nominated Parish Council representatives for specific activities, and 24 that we do for:

Highways inc. noise & mud.

Traffic inc. air traffic

Environment & pond/street/play area maintenance/village upkeep.

Monitoring vulnerable people and access to local services.

Leisure/social

Selection/summary of things people said they like about the village

Small picturesque village / sense of community

The rural tranquility of this relatively unspoilt Essex village - one of the few remaining.

Church, Community House, green areas, pond, walks, the atmosphere in the pub

The relative isolation, countryside + people

No modern developments

Birdbrook News

Selection/summary of things people said they dislike about the village

Lack of amenities

Lack of facilities for children aged 10+.

Difficult to get anywhere easily.

Lack of cohesiveness

The lack of effort to celebrate Christmas, no Christmas lights on the tree on the green.

Speeding traffic

Lack of shop

Flooding on roads. Roads could be cleared of mud/leaves/stones to make walking in autumn-winter better

Noise from pub

Parking facilities

No shop or post office

Too much focus on Birdbrook itself to the detriment of outlying settlements.

Not much chance to meet people except for friends and neighbours

Lack of housing for new generation - forced to leave the village

Birdbrook Parish Plan

Prepared By: Birdbrook Parish Council

May/June 2013/**May 2016**

BIRDBROOK PARISH PLAN

2013/15 and Review

INTRODUCTION

Before outlining the Plan it is as well that some items are mentioned which have a bearing on what can be done by Birdbrook Parish Council.

1 the bulk of Birdbrook Village is a designated conservation area and as such is subject to many planning restrictions as well as the several listed buildings having individual restrictions. For example felling and lopping of any trees is not allowed without referral to Braintree District Council for advice. We believe this is the only full village in Braintree area to be a conservation area.

2 any land/property owner with a water course (river/stream/ditch/drainage channel) is responsible for keeping such water course clear and flowing to avoid any unnecessary flooding.

3 any land/property owner with a hedge or trees adjoining a footpath or highway should make sure the path/highway is not encroached upon and any trees which overhang a highway should not have any branches etc., lower than 5 metres.

The following Plan has been drawn up to match with the six areas identified in the Executive Summary which is a part of this document for cross-reference.

A Environment.

The Council have been active on speeding in the Parish and in recent years have arranged a 30 mph limit in Birdbrook Village and advisory 25 mph limits on parts of A1017 Baythorne End/Station Road. However there have been comments about narrow pavements, or no pavements, on A1017 and walking can be dangerous. It has been agreed with, Essex County Councillor David Finch's help, to apply to the Braintree Highways Panel for a 30 mph through Baythorne End to Station Road with ancillary signs warning of people in the road.

Report back as soon as possible on outcome with idea of completion within 18 mths. (Dec 2014)

The Council has continued to be proactive on this account, reporting regularly in the Birdbrook News the intransigent position of Essex County Highways. Following a petition from a local resident in April 2015 and further proposals from the Parish Council, and the involvement of the local MP Essex Highways have decided to take no action following their deployment of speed testing locations. Representations continue and further news will be reported in the Birdbrook News.

On the question of road maintenance, a lot of potholes had been or were being filled as this Plan was being prepared. However there are more problems than just potholes, and we have flooding problems, so the Council still wants a meeting on site with Essex Highways to discuss matters. David Finch has offered assistance in arranging this, and could even attend

Aim to report back on outcome of any such meeting with a plan as to what can happen in December 2013 Birdbrook News. A plan can then hopefully be described as to when it will all go ahead.

Representations regarding flooding and potholes is on-going and has met some success with ditch clearance being undertaken at key points in the parish. One pot hole in the village was filled in 2015 but others remain.

As has been mentioned before, speedier action can sometimes be achieved on potholes if these are reported direct by individuals.

We will ensure the contact details are correct and appear in Birdbrook News from next available issue, Sept 2013.

Completed.

Road gritting and Snow Clearance is a problem here and in most surrounding parishes. A group has been set up under the Community Issues Meeting (see Chairman's Report 2013 re this Meeting's agenda) and they have learned that Essex Highways are looking at revising their current arrangements which should be of benefit to all of us.

We have been told it is hoped to have something in place for this winter. Report back within 6 mths. and if ECC result not satisfactory the group will go ahead with devising what can be done locally.

The Essex Highways revision did not occur and we remain at the status quo. For Birdbrook this means only bus routes, excluding school buses are gritted i.e Station Road, Moat Road and Fell Road are gritted.

The Parish has a stock pile of salt and has devised a plan to use local volunteers to salt the roads and footpaths manually that do not benefit from the ECC programme.

The two telephone boxes still need attention and a suggestion has been made that the parish pump could perhaps be restored. There may be grants available for this type of work.

Look into what can be done and have a decision by June 2014 and if this is possible complete by the end of this Council, May 2015.

In 2015 work was started on the phone box in Birdbrook by one of the Parish Councillors, it has now been stripped back and repainted in the original colour. Work on replacing the glass will be started in the Spring of 2016 and it is planned that work will be undertaken on the phone box in Baythorne End later in 2016.

Discussion have taken place about the use of these boxes and the councillors are investigating installing defibrillators.

B Leisure and Recreation.

In the main this is not an area the Parish Council has any responsibility for. However it is possible for the Council to put people in touch with areas available for help. For example The Plough asked for grants towards bringing the toilets inside and the Council were pleased to give the scheme their support to this application.

An ongoing requirement as and when needed.

Regular maintenance of the playgrounds has continued. Each year the equipment is assessed by an outside agency which reports its findings to the Council who have agreed for all maintenance recommendations to be carried out.

On broadband, the Essex Super Highway should be completed by 2015 and 95% of County covered. We do not know yet where Birdbrook Parish features. Another group from Community Issues Meeting is looking at this and we know of other schemes which can be explored to see if Birdbrook could "stand alone".

A completion by 2015.

Much work has been undertaken in bringing superfast broadband to the Parish. Baythorne End now has a link and BT intends to bring superfast broadband to 12 houses in Birdbrook in 2016 with the rest of the village having access by 2017. Full details are in the BirdbrookNnews available from the website. (birdbrook.org.uk)

Youth Club. Again this has been put forward as a project for the Community Issues Meeting. All of the parishes have had clubs at one time or another which have finished for one reason or another. Each parish will give details of ideas in their local newsletters and ask for volunteers.

Report on progress Jan/Feb 2014

Completed. No volunteers came forward from any of the four parishes involved.

C Housing and Development

There is not likely to be any development agreed in the conservation part of the parish and we know from previous attempts even the Planning Inspectorate Office for England are not likely to sanction any new housing due to complete lack of facilities. Braintree has a District Plan, currently under review, but on the numbers of houses they are expected to provide feel they have enough Brownfield sites and development sites in Braintree, Halstead and Witham without encroaching on the Greenfield sites. There is a strong feeling to preserve the very rural part of North West Essex with its many unspoiled villages.

There is interest in local oil buying groups. A Parish Councillor is currently reviewing to such schemes to see how they stand up.

A report in Birdbrook News Sept 2013.

The reported appeared as stated in September 2013.

Under the Issues Meeting ideas on energy saving have been looked at with various bodies. Ridgewell PC are to hold a public meeting to pass on any useful information.

Members of the Council will attend this meeting and if, as expected; it is felt suitable for Birdbrook Parishioners, we will organize our own meeting Oct/Nov 2013

The Ridgewell meeting took place and was poorly attended and little of significance came to light.

D Education and Employment

Many local areas have tried education class schemes and without fail all have ceased due to lack of support or it being too expensive to provide tutors. A very recent start up in Ridgewell is in the verge of closing as down to 3 or 4 members. Basic problem is too many people want too many classes so not enough to support any class really. The Community Issues Meeting is to look at if it is worthwhile asking Essex and or Braintree if prepared to put some of their classes out locally but numbers would again be a problem.

Will look at if it is possible to at least publish details of local area classes available, report Mar 2014.

Braintree District Council co-ordinate this work and are the best point of contact.

Now the parish is no longer predominantly a farming community most people commute to work, some locally others far and wide. There are no real employment avenues locally but the forthcoming development at New England may have some opportunities and the new Research Park at Haverhill may have jobs.

Changes over next 2-3 years.

Consultation has taken place over a number of years and the finalisation of Braintree District Plan is still awaited.

E Public Transport

Something the Parish Council has been involved in over the years having tried a couple of schemes with no success. Essex Passenger Transport seems only interested in Shopper Buses and are in no way interested in leisure transport. We have also been told there are no more grants or other funding available for transport schemes. As with education there are too many people looking to go to too many places and not enough to support one service. Another group from the Community Issues Group is looking at transport for the four parishes to see if a broader approach will work.

Report developments in 9 mths.

At each Council meeting the Chairman has reported the planned changes in public transport arrangements and these are a regular feature in the Birdbrook news. Owing to lack of use the routes are under threat on a permanent basis.

F Village Amenities and Services.

As far as we are aware the Village Agent scheme to help older people with problems is still in force. The Council will make sure this is the case and republish all the details including contact.

Details in Birdbrook News Dec 2013 or Feb 2014 depending on space available.

All contact information is now recorded in the Birdbrook News.

We know of one scheme which takes parishioners to doctor's surgery for appointments or to collect prescriptions. This is of course all dependent on volunteers with cars and availability.

Find out how this system operates, who controls it, and if deemed possible it might work in our parish set up a meeting of interested parties within 9 mths.

This issue has been discussed on regular basis and reported in the minutes. The favoured scheme is for volunteers to use their own cars on a weekly basis. Contact with the volunteer will be via a mobile phone. Volunteers are sought and they should contact a Parish Councillor to join the list.

A Neighbourhood Watch Scheme did operate in the parish but ceased to function as volunteers would not come forward as coordinators etc.

The Parish Council will contact the police and Ridgewell Parish who run a scheme, to attend a meeting of all who are interested within 6-9 mths. This meeting will need to have people prepared to take on the various roles required to facilitate such a scheme.

In order for this to start a public meeting needs to be held. The Parish Council will facilitate the meeting but are not eligible to run the scheme. The proposal is to hold a meeting in the Autumn 2016.

Various items came up under a Tactical Issues heading. These are all items on the councils list at virtually every meeting and take up the bulk of our expenditure already. The bus shelter is being worked on as this Plan is being prepared. On the dog mess issue we have looked at providing bins but they are expensive to buy and fix and at the time it was impossible to find anyone to empty them who had the required facilities to dispose of the mess. It has been brought to our attention that some schemes are now working again. **Look into this again over next year to see if feasible.**

The bus shelters have been replaced in Birdbrook and now in Baythorne End. Dog bins are now in place in two sites in Birdbrook and the erection of a dog bin in Baythorne End has been commissioned.

Proposals for 2016 – 2019 include investigating the possibility of solar panels to provide power for street lighting. **Updates will be in the minutes of meetings and in the Birdbrook news.**

CONCLUSION

Overall the feeling comes across that most people seem happy with life in Birdbrook Parish at present. Hopefully with the things above things will feel better for more people.

However all things cost money and we cannot keep increasing the precept but most of what is outlined can be achieved with little cost to the Parish Council.

It should be pointed out that although a councillor has to stand for election it is a purely voluntary job with no payment whatsoever and it is not intended that councillors should have to carry out any or all of the work personally. We have been lucky in recent years that on each council a couple of Members have been prepared to do some of this work but this probably cannot be sustained. In the circumstances is there anybody out there who would like to come forward with any particular skill to join a panel of people prepared to do the odd job for the Council on a voluntary basis. Please contact the Parish Clerk or any Parish Councillor.

The Council proposes to produce a list of community activities/action and will seek volunteers from the local community to undertake these tasks. Full details and how to volunteer will be in the Birdbrook News

Birdbrook Parish Council

June 2013.

May 2016

Acknowledgements

Thanks to:

Birdbrook Parish Council <http://www.birdbrook.org.uk>

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Hedingham School Reprographics Dept. for printing this and other documents in connection with this project.

And everyone who submitted a completed Survey Form.

WHY DO WE HAVE A PICTURE OF THE CHURCH ON THE FRONT COVER?

Firstly, we felt that the church is an icon of the parish and most people know what it is, where it is and what it is used for.

Secondly, before the Parish Council was inaugurated in its present form in 1894, the church and parish councils were one and the same thing. Since 1894 there have been two sets of councils, the Parochial Church Council and the Parish Council, both roughly based on the same areas, and each looking after their own interests. This was the case in most areas and in Birdbrook's case both have continued operationally since that time. Therefore as this is the Parish Council's first Parish Plan we felt it worthwhile returning to our roots as it were.

QUALITY COUNCILS

The Quality Parish and Town Council Scheme is a government initiative for all parish and town councils in England. The accreditation process is conducted by the County Accreditation Panel on behalf of Her Majesty's Government, and co-ordinated with the support of the National Association of Local Councils. A parish or town council has to provide documentary evidence to support claims of the services and contact it provides to a high standard and Quality Status is only granted if a set level is achieved. Birdbrook was first accredited in 2005, at that time the smallest council in Essex to be accredited, and we were re-accredited in 2012 which is operative until 2016 when a new application will need to be made.

This scheme is no longer active and has been replaced by The Local Council Award Scheme. The Parish Council was short of three Councilors after the election in May 2015 and is therefore no longer eligible to participate,

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