

NEWS FROM COLD NORTON PARISH COUNCIL, INCLUDING COMMENTS FROM THE MAY 2005 MEETING AND THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

The Annual Parish Meeting was held in May, and was well attended. Reports were heard from the Parish Council, the District Council, and the Police via our local Community Officer P.c. Paul Hughes.

Parish Council Chairman Prof. Les Barclay described another busy year's work, with 41 planning applications to consider, the District Council's decision on most of which had been in line with Parish Council recommendations. The exception was the 5 applications relating to land in Brennan Close. When the Close was originally being planned, the Parish Council had been concerned to limit the scope for future development and to soften the hard line between the development and adjacent land. The District Council had agreed to have a buffer zone beyond the gardens of dwellings in Brennan Close. Recently however there had been some indication that the buffer zone has not been maintained. Although the Parish Council had wished to retain the earlier decision the District Council had not maintained its previous decision, and Prof. Barclay felt that this is an example of difficulties with the planning process. In a number of other cases the Parish Council has had the view that a planning application was just a precursor of future further development, but every case has to be considered at face value.

Regarding the playing field, it was noted that the various facilities on the field are being used to varying degrees, although there is some disappointment that no-one has come forward to organise the use of the hard standing for team games.

Because of the retirement of our Village Caretaker Mr. Alec Paul, everyone joined Prof. Barclay in thanking him for his very apparent good work around the village, and in honour of this a tree had been planted at the Nature Reserve, and a framed scroll was presented to Mr. Paul at the meeting. Prof. Barclay also said some very kind words about me as Parish Council clerk, because of my impending retirement.

Prof. Barclay ended on a more personal note, saying that he had been a member of the Parish Council since 1970, having moved to Cold Norton in 1963, and he described how much the village has changed since that time. He said that the job of Parish Council Chairman is not at all one of power, but just one of spokesman for the Parish Council, and he had found his years as a councillor to be very interesting.

Mr. Wakeling gave a presentation on the Village Hall project, describing the background and the financial implications. A feasibility study has been completed by a firm of architects renowned for this type of work, and a grant had been obtained for this study. The next step is the fundraising and grant applications.

In the report from District Councillor John Archer, he said that at last year's Parish Meeting he had discussed the marine lake. The matter had subsequently gone to court and the District Council had unfortunately been found guilty, with a heavy fine plus £30,000 in costs. This has caused a lot of problems in that the HSE has insisted that the lake is closed permanently, and in its place there will be a water play area.

Mr. Archer said that central Government is insisting that local authorities make savings, i.e. they must make 2½% savings year on year for the next two years, which will not be difficult for the coming year because a District Council-owned property in Downs Road has been sold, but the following year will be a problem. It may be that, in order to save money, the Planning Area Committees will have to be removed, which would be very regrettable.

Mr. Archer confirmed that he had that morning spoken to Mr. Tony Ciaburro (Head of Highways and Transportation at the County Council) about Cold Norton's zebra crossing, and had been told that the zebra crossing will go in between July and August this year, with equipment to reduce the speeds because the 85th percentile speed is too high: it is to be slowed down by Vehicle Activated signs (i.e. they flash when drivers approach too fast). These will then be removed, and then later permanently re-installed if necessary.

District Councillor Mr. Lawrence Cooper stood up and said that the job of District Council Chairman requires a great deal of time and dedication, and that John Archer and his wife had given a great deal over the two years, and so "both of them deserve a certificate of merit."

P.c. Hughes reported that the year had been a quiet one for crime in Cold Norton – he reported on the few instances that had taken place. He then went on to discuss the fact that the County Council has recently decreed that the road through Cold Norton and Stow Maries is a County Route and not a Local Road. He said that this is unfortunate, because it negates arguments that traffic should use other routes (even though they are available), it will make it more difficult to require traffic calming on this road, and it makes arguments for speed reduction more difficult. Nevertheless the County Council is adamant that Latchingdon Road is a County Route. P.c. Hughes expressed the hope that the zebra crossing will help, and said "*Cold Norton is unique as a village in that it has a lot of pedestrian traffic.*"

At the Parish Council's AGM held recently, Sue Garnham was elected as Chairman for this year, and Prof. Les Barclay as Vice Chairman. After the AGM, the ordinary monthly meeting was held, and the following can be reported.

The District Council had given the following planning decisions: -

Application No. AGR/MAL/05/00335. Land Off Burnham Avenue. Proposed storage barn for straw and hay. Prior approval required

Application No. FUL/MAL/05/00245. 14 Howe Green Road. Formation of dormers to provide room in roof space. Approved.

The Parish Council made recommendations on 2 applications as follows: -

FUL/MAL/05/00356. Norton Hall St Stephens Road. Retention of timber fencing, walls and piers and construct new entrance. Recommendation: to refuse consent because "it is out of keeping, and the wall is visually intrusive when approaching the bend immediately to the west of the site. It is a suburban intrusion into an otherwise totally rural lane."

FUL/MAL/05/00387. 29 The Fairways. Conservatory. Recommendation: - Not harmful, approve.

Mr. Archer reported that he had received a complaint from a motorcyclist about a drain at the edge of the road that had caused damage to his vehicle near to Palepit Farm. There is also a raised drain cover in the middle of Latchingdon Road, near to the old Post Office. Essex County Council is to be notified.

Regarding the Village Hall project, it was noted that it is not possible to make application for lottery funding at present, because the Community Fund has ended, and will not be replaced until June at the earliest. There being no point in making the smaller applications first, this is all on hold at present.

The Parish Council was pleased to receive a letter from a young Cold Norton resident expressing interest in use of the football pitch. This is the second group to do so, and approval has been given.

Cold Norton's recently purchased "Cowpiece Nature Reserve" had now been officially opened, in the presence of Class 5 from Cold Norton Primary School, head teacher Mrs. Ann Church, deputy head teacher Mrs. Jane Hayward, and Parish Council members plus retiring Village Caretaker and the Clerk. The school will be using the Nature Reserve as an educational resource. At the opening, Parish Councillor Andrea Allen had explained that the Parish Council has maintained the Nature Reserve under a lease from Christina Foyle's Trust since 1993. The initial work to clear out the pond and plant the area had been done with a grant from the Ruddles Countryside Campaign. After Christina Foyle died the land had been sold to the Parish Council (at less cost than the original grant), and this official opening was in recognition that the parish now owns the land. The name chosen is the very ancient name of the field where the Nature Reserve is located, which local historian Councillor Sue Garnham had found on old maps of the area. This name had been included on a new and very attractive sign, and Mrs. Allen had thanked Councillor Charles Litscher for his generosity in providing this sign. Cowpiece field had been so named hundreds of years ago because it was where the farmer's house cow was kept. Mrs. Allen had expressed the Parish Council's thanks and gratitude to our Village Caretaker Mr. Alec Paul for all his sterling work in this area and, since he has recently retired, an oak tree had been planted in his honour as part of the opening ceremony. Head teacher Mrs. Church had spoken of the fact that the thread of history brings together the past, the present, and the future, in that this area had been enjoyed by generations in the past, children now can enjoy it, and also their children into future generations can do so.

Dates of future meetings - The Parish Council agreed a request that monthly meetings should be scheduled for the first Wednesday instead of Thursdays in future. Next meeting will be held on Wednesday 1 June 2005.

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| <p>To contact the Parish Council: Write to the Parish Clerk (Mary Bryant) at 5 Thatchers Croft, Latchingdon, Chelmsford, CM3 6UD, or phone/fax 01621 744446, or e-mail to mary.bryant@ntlworld.com. Cold Norton's web site is www.cold-norton.org.uk</p> |
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