

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING - CHAIRMANS REPORT FOR 2016/17

The Annual Parish meeting is not a council meeting but a meeting of residents from the parish of Leicester Forest East that takes place this time of the year as required by the 1972 Local Government Act.

Residents are very welcome to come along and participate in the meeting, as indeed they are to every parish council meeting.

Before I start my summary of the council year I would like to welcome and thank all our parish councillors, our parish clerk and our premises officer for their commitment over the last 12 months – without their work the parish would be a poorer place.

During the year, we have been delighted to welcome three new councillors to our team – Peter Nicholson, Peter Kitchen and Brian Langton. The councillors all live in different parts of the parish and they have already evidenced a wealth of knowledge, skill and experience that I am sure will be of enormous benefit to the council of the coming years.

The Parish Council has had a long-standing mission statement which is “to work towards representing and promoting the interests and the well-being of the parish” and so the things we have done and are doing to make Leicester Forest East a better place to live seems an appropriate theme for this year’s report.

Resident comment on our parks, traffic issues, parking issues and the aesthetic look of the parish. Some of those issues are within our powers to change over time subject to budget limitations, others beyond the direct control and authority of a parish council. The County Council and District Council have statutory powers within the parish in such areas as our highways and our housing - we try to actively represent residents and work to influence or campaign on the parishes behalf where the required powers lay beyond the parish council.

Parks – Our local parks are something of which we are proud and are something in which the parish council invest a great deal of time, money and resources. During the past year, there have been some improvements and some enforced changes:

- The play equipment in Forest East Park has been fenced off to make the area safer for young children and maintenance of the footpaths will take place shortly.
- Dog control orders are now in place - this means that it is an offence to not clear your dog’s poo. The used poo bag can be disposed of in either a dog bin (of which there are several) or a general waste bin. It is also an offence to walk a dog without carrying spare poo bags
- We sought and acted on advice to assist drainage issues within Forest East Park. The work has unfortunately not fully alleviated the issue which is challenging at times of high rainfall give the local ‘high water table’. Further work however will be undertaken during 2017
- We have had to take down the remaining wooden play equipment and replace fencing in Kings Walk Park following continued vandalism. The Parish Council does intend, as finances permit, to provide some replacement equipment in this park and I hope that 2018’s report will be able to report on some good news in his respect

Traffic and Parking – These sorts of issues affect many people but continue to be very difficult to resolve as they are largely out of the direct control of the parish council

- Parking near to the Doctors Surgery on Warren Lane and parking close to Stafford Leys School - following parish council campaigning we successfully persuaded the county council to put yellow lines close to the various side roads to assist residents with their own parking and with visibility issues. The local police are also now taking a proactive look at issues around illegal and inconsiderate parking close to the school. A reminder to everybody is that the parish council have a car park at the parish hall on Kings Drive and at the entrance to Leicester Forest East Park off Somerfield Way – both are free and both are open at school drop-off and pick-up times
- Hinckley Road traffic congestion affect many people, particularly on their way to work. The parish council have been very concerned about this issue for several years given that local housing numbers and therefore car volumes continue to rise year on year. Amendments to the traffic junctions at both Desford Crossroads and Beggars Lane (both ends) will take place as New Lubbesthorpe starts to be populated
- The Parish Council have requested and sought assurances from the county council highways that they will investigate the Beggars Lane, Warren Lane and Kirby Lane junctions onto the Hinckley Road to see if 'yellow boxing' the junctions would assist residents in getting onto the Hinckley Road Leicester bound. The Parish Council will be monitoring the highways departments actions over the coming months
- Our District Councillor, Stuart Coar is actively liaising with the county council over the lighting sequence at the Beggars Lane/Hinckley Road junction as there have been several complaints about the light sequence at this junction
- The Parish Council have agreed to the purchase of a traffic speed indicator sign that we can move to a few different locations around the parish. When installed the sign will show the speed of an approaching vehicle and record data. The collected data will then be used by the police to provide a targeted approach to speed control within the parish.
- Parking on Park Drive has become an ever-increasing issue during the last year. Data on offending vehicles left without valid tax/insurance is being collected and we hope that between the district council and the police this issue will be sorted

Aesthetic look of the Parish – this is something that the parish council has looked to improve year on year.

- We increased the number of hanging baskets along the Hinckley Road and we also pay to locate some on the north side of the road where it falls within the parish of Kirby Muxloe. This year councillors put winter bedding plants in the various planters around the parish and will do so with summer bedding in a few weeks time.
- New for 2017 will be the replacement of one or two of the older planters and the provision of a new planter in front of the parish hall. This type of work will hopefully continue as a rolling programme as finances allow

- The Christmas Tree located close to the road at St. Andrews church was once again erected and lit as a joint effort with the church. Both the Church and the Parish Council contribute to the tree and its running costs and we had many compliments again this year. The lighting of the tree took place on 1st December and was attended by several hundred people – for December 2017 I'll work on the provision of a microphone so that everyone can hear the speech and the music that took place around the tree.
- For this coming Christmas, we are to extend the lighting within the parish. When the hanging baskets are removed the lighting columns will for a short while become home for some Christmas lights

Sundry bits and pieces –

- **Cemetery Provision** – This is an issue we are trying to resolve now that Kirby Muxloe parish council have withdrawn the right of Leicester Forest East residents to use their cemetery. No suitable land is available within our parish boundary but we are involved in the discussions to provide a new cemetery on land that falls within the parish of Enderby. The land will hopefully be made available by the landowner on whose land New Lubbesthorpe is being built. If this scheme comes to fruition then the cemetery would be available for Leicester Forest East residents to use along with residents of Enderby and a small number of other local parishes.
- **Dog Bins** – Dog bins around the parish are provided by the district council (those in our park are provided by the parish council). The parish council however pays for the district council to empty all the bins wherever they are located. We had sought additional bins to reflect the growing nature of the parish and are delighted that additional bins have been installed by the district council. Various locations have benefitted including the new Taylor Wimpey development and along Forest House Lane close to the public footpaths onto New Lubbesthorpe.

The bins will all shortly be repositioned by the district council at a lower height to meet changing health & safety rules

Local Smells – The parish council in conjunction with residents, district council and higher authorities have been actively working with companies to resolve several noise and smell issues emanating from their businesses. I would like to put on record my thanks to Casepak for all of their work. They have made massive improvements that are already benefitting residents of the Packer Avenue area. We are still working to improve issues at SaladWorks/Samworths and are hopeful that the plans they have submitted to the district council will see similar progress made

Parish Notice Boards – These boards provide information on council meetings but also on other local groups and events – please take the time to look at them. Further boards will be installed on the new David Wilson development at the bottom of Forest House Lane and on the Taylor Wimpey development (thanks go to David Wilson Homes for agreeing to pay for the board on their development)

Professional Theatre in Leicester Forest East – the parish council have provided two professional productions at the parish hall. The first production in Autumn 2016 was based on

a second world war tea dance and was both well received and attended. The second production took place at the start of April and has set a very high standard that we are determined to maintain. We sold 80 tickets for Eddie & the Gold Tops which was a musical comedy about a 1960's milkman living a double life as a local milkman and an incognito pop star. The parish council have been delighted by the productions, the attendance and the feedback we have received and our initial thoughts are that we will aim to host three further productions over the next 12 months as well as look to host events as part of the Leicester Comedy festival next February.

Gala – Unfortunately due to bad weather leading up to the gala and forecast for the day, the September 2016 Gala was cancelled. It was a great shame as the list of performers was very impressive. The parish council have decided to not run a gala in 2017 and instead divert time and resources into other local events. A number of ideas are being considered and resident input to assist this process would be gratefully received.