



WEST BERGHOLT PARISH COUNCIL

AGENDA

1. Welcome and introduction from the Chairman—Mr John Gili-Ross
2. Mike Lee, Sergeant at Copford Police Station to discuss policing issues
3. a) Discussion on issues sent in by residents
b) Any issues raised from the floor
4. Concluding remarks

Following the formal part of the meeting refreshments will be available and an opportunity for you to have informal one to one discussions with your Parish or Borough Councillors

WEST BERGHOLT PARISH COUNCIL
ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting
Held in the John Lampon Hall
Wednesday 25th June 2008—7.30p.m.

In the Chair: John Gili-Ross
Members Present: Sally Butcher, Jenny Church, Bernard Colbron, Andrew Savage, David Short, Peter Sleight, Chris Stevenson, Harry Stone, Bob Tyrrell
Clerk: Val Walsom
Present: Councillor Tod, Councillor Willetts, 10 members of the public
Apologies: Peter Johnson

Reports from the committees and the minutes of last year's Annual Parish Meeting were distributed in a booklet.
Before the meeting started refreshments were served.

1. **Welcome and introduction from the Chairman—Mr John Gili-Ross**
John Gili-Ross welcomed all. He explained that this is a new format for the Annual Parish Meeting and that it would be an informal but, hopefully informative evening. The meeting had been better advertised around the village and on the website this year.

2. **A short presentation on the completed Parish Plan and what this means for our community. This will be followed by questions and observations**
Chris Stevenson gave a presentation on the Parish Plan under the following headings:
What is a Parish Plan (and who is producing it)?
What have we done already?
2007/2008: Year of progress. 21 people volunteered to help take the Plan forward
Establishing priorities for the village
Spring 2008 consultations
Overall priorities
Priorities for the Parish Council
What happens next?
Action Plan
Do you need any more help?
Where can I find out more?

There were no questions from the floor.

John Gili-Ross commented that the Parish Plan was very important. The government is trying to get local communities to look after their own affairs. The Parish Plan also gives credibility when applying for grants. Lexden Road pond has been improved, driven by local residents. The Parish Council needs

to maintain this for the benefit of the village.
The RCCE Best Kept Village organisers visited West Bergholt and we have been short-listed for an award. The Parish Plan was considered an important factor.

John Gili-Ross thanked the Parish Plan Steering Group.

3a) Discussion on written issues sent in by residents

No written issues were received.

3b) Any issues raised from the floor

Issue: Some users of the hall have been having problems with locks on cupboards in the kitchen.

Response: The cupboards are being looked at. The external fabric of the hall is currently a priority for refurbishment. This will, hopefully, mainly be paid for by grants.

Issue: The village handyman does a good job. What are his areas and do they include the church yards?

Response: Gary Walls' work is confined to the environs of the village and the hall. His workload is channelled through the Clerk and the Environment committee. The church areas are the responsibility of the churches.

Our footpaths are a disgrace due to a lack of funding. A Local Highways Panel is currently being formed. It will have a say in where expenditure will be placed. Essex County Council has implemented a rangers scheme. This may not be working effectively as they are mainly 'patching' footpaths etc. A fallen tree in Hall Road was dealt with very quickly by Gary. He is also clearing the verge in front of the pond. The residents need to pool together to improve their local environment as was done around the Lexden Road pond.

Issue: Are there any more details on the Chitts Hill crossing?

Response: Councillor Willetts said that this is still in the pipeline but is currently delayed. Once the automated barrier is installed it will be manned for at least 6 months until it is certain that the barrier is working safely.

Issue: Work on the Village Green is still not completed following the Compulsory Purchase Order. The area is still not registered as Village Green.

Response: The Chair of the Environment committee is unwell. There is regular dialogue between the Trustees and Essex County Council. The sub-contractor is not progressing with the work as fast as we had hoped. Essex County Council is funding a large part of this project.

Issue: Was the Covenant relaxed on Macnally's yard?
Response: No it wasn't.

Issue: The notice board outside the Co-op is super. However, the latest Parish Council minutes read that letters about encroachment onto the Lorkin Daniell Playing Field were going out to residents of Mumford Close instead of Mumford Close and New Church Road.

Response: This was an error and the letters will be sent to residents of Mumford Close and a resident of New Church Road. The Parish Council feels that the notice board is a big asset to the village. It is hoped there will be 3 new 'Welcome to West Bergholt' signs erected very shortly. Colchester Borough Council's Attended Freighter Service will be on 26th July and 20th September at the Orpen Hall. It was felt that a 'green' skip should be provided.

Concluding remarks

John Gili-Ross concluded as follows:

This year saw the resignation of Suzanne Bowden and the co-option of Jenny Church and Sally Butcher. Gary Walls replaced Graham Broom as handyman.

Thanks went to the Parish Councillors, Val Walsom and June Mayhew. The Hall and Environment committees work very hard to ensure both areas are maintained for the benefit of the village. Thanks also went to the sub-committee responsible for organising the change of format for the meeting.

The village website is the biggest means of communications. There are many hits each day including many from other parts of the country and from around the globe. The site is open for use of anyone who wants to promote a village club etc.

The Bergholt Youth Group (BYG) organised a visit from an Essex Youth Service youth bus which was in position in the car park for those who wished to look around it following the meeting.

The meeting finished at 9p.m.

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN – John Gili-Ross

Welcome to the West Bergholt Annual Parish Meeting.

During the last 12 months West Bergholt was honoured by winning the Essex Best Kept Village award for the second time in 5 years, together with third prize in the Essex Village of the Year competition. These awards are no longer given to the most picturesque villages in our region. Our village won these awards after being judged to have excelled in the provision of diverse recreational and community services for the young, teenage, adult and senior members of our community. In making these awards the judging panel decided that our village stood out clearly as the best all-round village in Essex.

It is our residents that collectively helped win these awards and the organisers and club leaders that have made the difference yet again. Whilst some organisers may have changed over the years, their replacements continue the excellent work of meeting the needs of a modern and diverse village community.

At the last Annual Meeting our Parish Plan was launched and the working party continues to develop initiatives to meet the aims set out within the Plan. We should not underestimate the importance of our Parish Plan, which reflects the views and aspirations of residents and acts as a strategic pointer for our community to work towards in the years to come.

You will read of the activities and achievements made by the Parish Council sub committee members working on behalf of the village during the last year. Whilst meeting formally on almost a monthly basis, members also donate many hours of their free time addressing day to day issues and activities to achieve greater efficiency and easier decision making by the Parish Council as a whole.

Your Parish Councillors are very aware of the trust placed in them by residents to spend public money correctly and wisely. Evaluating new or replacement items and services and choosing the right suppliers that provide value for money is a very time consuming activity. None the less your Parish Councillors continue to undertake this responsibility, often without thanks, driven only by a desire to do what is best for the village.

We continue to review projects that will help improve and enhance the community whilst remaining within available budgets. For a number of years the Parish Council has successfully applied for and been awarded grants and donations to implement community projects. This funding is essential if we are to improve village facilities for all residents. Recognising that grants and donations from external organisations are likely to be in short supply in the foreseeable future, it has been necessary to increase the Parish Precept, (the part of your Council Tax that goes directly to run our village) by a much greater percentage than in previous years. Even with this increase, West Bergholt Parish Precept remains one of the lowest in the Borough of Colchester.

I would like to convey my personal thanks to all the members of the Parish Council for their commitment, dedication and professionalism. It is an honour to have been asked to remain as Chairman over the last year, a role much simplified by the hard work and support of my fellow Parish Councillors.

Particular thanks go to Val Walsom, our Clerk for ensuring the affairs of the Parish are kept in order and operate efficiently. My thanks go to our council support staff, in particular June Mayhew, the Halls Administrator and Gary Walls, the village handyman.

REPORTS FROM THE COMMITTEES

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE REPORT—David Short

The Environment Committee undertakes all matters for the village that do not come under the remit of Colchester Borough Council or Essex County Council. The following is a short report of the past year.

ALLOTMENTS these are along Chapel Road

It has been another successful year for the allotments. Good growing conditions have resulted in a productive year for plot holders. That and other factors have resulted in an ever increasing demand for plots. The management committee have taken steps such as only letting plots in 5 rod lots to keep the waiting list down. A few plots have been relinquished and more have been created by clearing the only remaining uncultivated area on the site. This has been the major area of expenditure this year in a budget of over £1000 created from the rents on the eighty plus lots. Keeping the site well managed is a priority and so a skip is now provided once a year and monthly central bonfires have continued to improve the appearance of the site. Other expenditure has been on the control of vermin, a problem which needs to be continually addressed. The surrounding fence has been repaired adding to the image of a valued and well used resource for the village.

POORS LAND this area lies between Heathlands School and Colchester Road

The goal areas are to be re-turfed following a season of full usage. Additional trees have been planted around the edge of the land and Atkins has commenced reinstatement of the land bordering the Village Green. Further planning is to take place there shortly. The old entrance barrier has been removed and replaced and the wooden gate has been repaired.

VILLAGE GREEN this is the area in front of the school

Work is in progress to clear the bramble overgrowth and to restore the heath to its original status as a Heathlands amenity.

LORKIN DANIELL PLAYING FIELD the field around Orpen Hall

Work is in progress to repair and service the play equipment following a recent inspection of the area. Talks are ongoing with the Football Club with regard to the proposed new club house and further development of the training facilities.

PONDS

Queens Road and Lexden Road ponds are managed by the Parish Council. Hall Road is looked after by the Parish Council.

The duck house has been replaced at the Queen's Head site and additional trees have been planted. The question of ownership of the Hall Road pond is being investigated but in the meantime it is being maintained by the village handyman. Debris and discarded vegetation has been removed from the Lexden Road site and again the area is now being maintained by the village handyman.

BUS SHELTER—CHAPEL ROAD

Seating has now been installed in the shelter.

ORPEN HALL CAR PARK

A programme of repairs to the surface of the car park has been agreed and will shortly be implemented.

GENERAL INFORMATION

It is the Environment Committee's aim to clean all graffiti as soon as it appears so as not to encourage further vandalism, similarly it is the aim to ensure that all litter is cleared as soon as possible. This work is carried out by the handyman sometimes assisted by members of the committee.

FINANCE REPORT—Andrew Savage

At the time of preparing this report we have heard that the Audit Commission are about to 'sign off' the 2007/08 accounts which will complete the external audit. My thanks go to Val Walsom for all the work she has undertaken, and to Ann Hallam for her (unpaid) Internal Auditor duties.

The accounts for the following year, ending March 2009, are currently being prepared and the pre-audited figures can be summed up as follows:

The Parish Council's General Accounts show an income for the year of over £35,600 as against an expenditure of just over £30,300. The difference is as a result of receiving slightly more income than anticipated combined with success in controlling our General Expenditure in these difficult times.

The Orpen Memorial Hall Accounts show an income, similar to the previous year, of over £34,600. Restraining the expenditure to under £31,600 means that the difference can be put towards the cost of major maintenance to the building's fabric. To this end we applied for grants (and have been promised £10,000) from Colchester Borough Council and Essex County Council for work to replace the guttering and downpipes, some of the external doors and one of the windows.

Moving forward to this year's finances, the Village precept has been raised by a significant percentage compared to the previous year. The increase (which works out at around 15 pence per week per household) needs to be placed in context. Over the past decade or so West Bergholt Parish Council has been able to maintain a low village precept whilst still providing improved community facilities through prudent financial planning and a positive attitude towards applying for and winning grants from various sources. This means that, even after the above increase, West Bergholt's contribution per household is still only the 18th highest of the 29 parish councils receiving money from Colchester Borough Council.

The reason for the increase is that in the past we have managed to gain many thousands of pounds each year (particularly from Essex County Council and Colchester Borough Council) to improve various community facilities such as the Village Hall and play equipment for children of all ages. In the current financial climate such generosity is unlikely to continue at those previous levels and therefore we have taken this into account when planning our future expenditure.

In addition, after 3 years of preparation the Parish Plan has been published. This has enabled the community to put forward its views on a variety of issues and clarifies what aspects of village life are important to them. As a result a table of actions clarifies what aspects of village life are important to them. As a result a table of actions has been produced for each of the 8 themes which try to capture all aspects of our village life. Many of these actions (e.g. 'provision of a youth club and

meeting place' and 'road safety and speeding traffic') will require leadership from the Parish and may have some financial implications.

We therefore believe that those few pennies a week will be put to good use!

VILLAGE BULLETIN REPORT—Bernard Colbron

During the past year the Bulletin has provided a cross section of news, stories and carries details of future events of village clubs. The advertisers remain loyal to the Bulletin and there have been very few changes. The Bulletin committee have varied the format and style of the Bulletin to help ensure an interesting publication.

The Bulletin is placed on the village web site and is obviously read by ex-pats in foreign places. Emails have been received from Canada, Australia and parts of Europe and on one occasion have even received pictures from a point near the summit of Mount Everest.

Thanks go to the editorial committee for their help in producing the Bulletin. In April Jon Lander, a Bulletin editor for many years felt it was time to resign from the committee as he and his wife Helen have decided to leave the village. I would like to thank him for all his help and contributions over many years. Taking his position on the committee we warmly welcome Jane Williams to the team.

One final note - the village population is getting larger which is reflected in the number of copies delivered to every household and the number is now closer to 1500.

PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT— Bob Tyrrell

The Planning Committee has regular meetings on the third Wednesday each month at 7.30 in the small committee room if anybody who wish to express their views on any planning application please feel free to just come along.

The role of the West Bergholt Planning Committee is very much one of consultation by Colchester Borough Council on local planning applications. These vary from a front porch to the larger developments in the Village. As the planning committee, we do not make decisions, we only make recommendation to CBC based on our local knowledge, we try to have a balanced view and act in the best interests of the village.

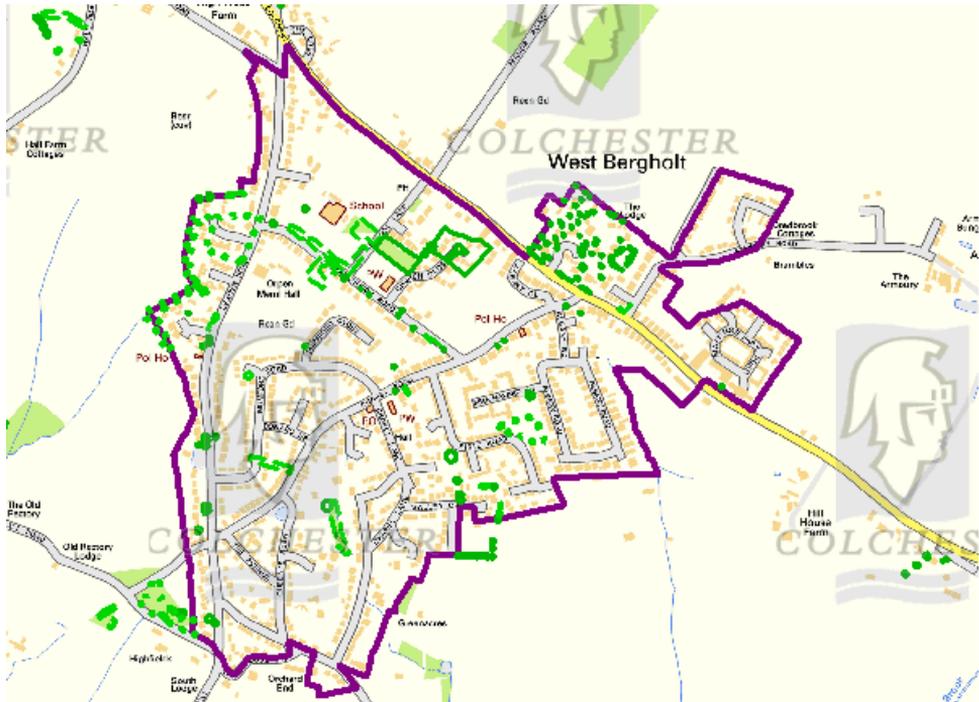
This year has been very quite partially due to the recession. We have been asked to comment on 50 applications, about the same as last year.

No comments -	Approved 33
No comments -	Refused 2
Comments -	Approved 5
Comments -	Refused 1
Awaiting outcome -	6
Withdrawn -	2
Awaiting appeal outcome-	1

Colchester Borough Council emerging Local Development Framework (LDF)

The planning committee had a meeting with Laura Chase of CBC. The current Planning system is changing from a traditional based Structure Plan to Local

The Current Village Envelope

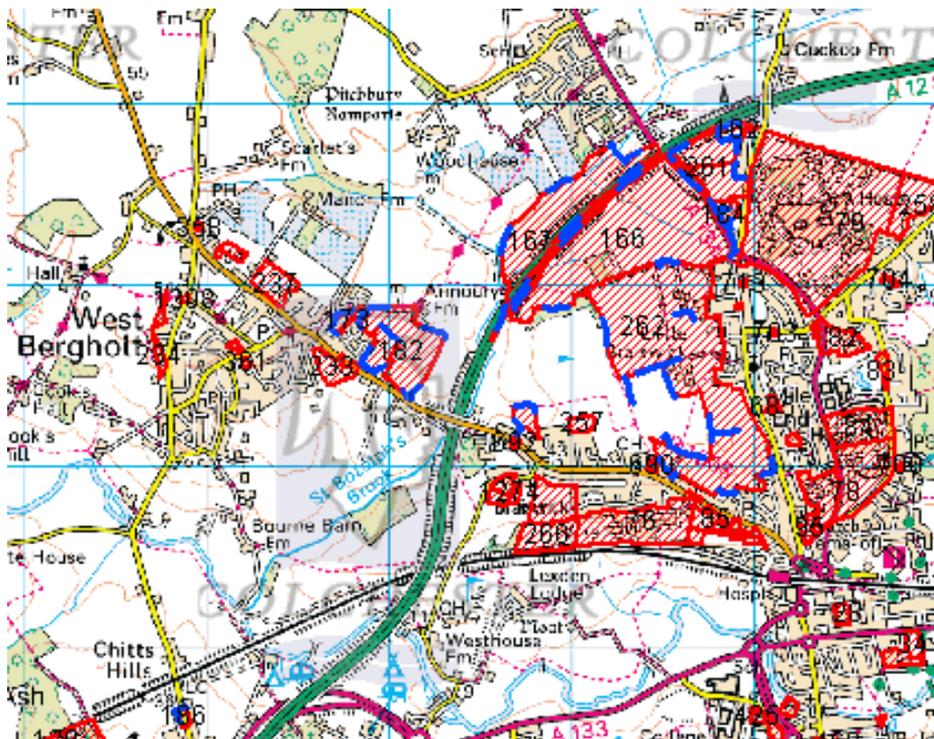


CBC has issued a list of development sites across the Borough with a probability rating. This will be subject to scrutiny and will be examined by a Planning Inspector.

The whole principle of the LDF is that it is flexible and sites will be constantly introduced and examined during its lifetime but it will be more difficult to introduce and justify new sites after the January 2009 deadline has passed.

The Parish Council could promote a development site "say for" Sheltered Housing and link it to a "Development Agreement" whereby a developer would have to contribute substantial amounts of money to fund road improvements and traffic calming in the village. There is no guarantee this would gain approval, as it would have an adverse effect on the value of the land.

LDF-Site Allocation and Options (North East Colchester)



Generally I think we are lucky, if you look at the areas earmarked for development in North East Colchester. Sites inside the A12 will take a bulk of the housing allocation. In the recent past West Bergholt has avoided larger developments because Heathlands School was too small to take any large influx of families but now the school place allocation system has changed, we are no longer protected. So in the future we will have to fight to retain our Village Envelope.

HALL COMMITTEE REPORT— Bernard Colbron

At the start of the 2008/2009 financial year the Hall Committee laid out its plans for the year matching these to the available budgets. Both the Orpen Hall and the John Lampon Hall continue to be heavily used by village residents with there being few free available rental periods.

The Halls sub committee decided to consolidate on previous years of change and in some instances disruption, whilst major improvements were initiated. The result have been very pleasing and allowed the committee to consolidate activities and plan for the future.

The committee are very pleased to announce that both Halls have been awarded the Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE) Quality Hallmark status during the last year. Award of this Quality certificate was one of the first made to an Essex village.

Our focus for the year has been to refurbish the exterior of the Orpen Hall. The windows and doors are in need of replacement, most being the originals installed when the hall was constructed in 1938. Likewise the rainwater systems and soffit boards are now beyond repair and in need of replacement. The cost for doing all of this work amounts to nearly £30,000 which is more than the Hall funds can afford. Grants were sought to assist in this replacement scheme but the lack of grant availability due to the recession means that only the most necessary items can be replaced. Orders have now been placed to replace all the remaining original doors of the Orpen Hall and to replace the entire rainwater system and soffits. It is hoped that further grants during 2009/2010 becoming available will permit the replacement of all windows.

Over the past year both Halls have been subject to minor vandalism including graffiti to the doors. This was quickly removed by our village handyman, and this appears to have kept this antisocial activity to a minimum. Vandals climbed onto the hall roofs and dislodged and broke some roof tiles and the repair costs being met from our budget.

Regrettably the Social Club, which forms part of the Orpen Hall fabric, was subject to break-ins during the year. Fortunately the majority of these repair costs were met by the Parish Council insurance.

In closing I would like to thank all the members of the Hall Committee for all their help and support over the past year. They are Sally Butcher, Jenny Church, David Short and Peter Sleigh.

One final note - the village population is getting larger which is reflected in the number of copies delivered to every household and the number is now closer to 1500.

PARISH PLAN REPORT – Chris Stevenson

Current Steering Group Members

Catherine Bailey; Jenny Church; John Ford; Murray Harlow; Gunter Klaphake (Secretary); Victoria Power (Treasurer); Chris Stevenson (Chair); Harry Stone; Chris Young

Previous members **Claire Cunningham (former Treasurer)**

1 Introduction

The Parish plan is now complete having taken approximately three years to prepare. The past year has focused on consulting on priorities and writing the draft and final versions of the plan.

2 Main Activities Carried Out

The group has met every month without fail over the last year and in addition many other meetings have been held to discuss individual ideas such as preparing consultation material. The notes of the meetings have been reported monthly to the Parish Council. The following is a simple summary of activities

Spring 2008: Consultation on Parish Plan priorities.

Summer 2008: exhibition of draft Parish Plan and results of consultations at Village Fayre.

Autumn 2008: Completion of Parish Plan (First Issue) and publicising this through newsletters, Village Bulletin and Village Website; adoption of plan by Parish Council

Winter 2008: Workshop to discuss how to progress the action plan; publication of Second Issue; submission of plan to Colchester and Essex Councils and RCCE; refreshing the Steering Group membership

The main medium of disseminating the plan's progress has again been the quarterly Village Bulletin and four articles have been written over the past year. The Autumn edition also contained an extensive "pull out" section summarising the plan for households to keep. As well as the Bulletin the village website has been used to document the progress of the plan; to publicise the results of consultations and of course to publish the plan itself. Good use has been made of the RCCE grant and PC contribution with over £1,000 spent on publication and consultation activities over the last three years.

3 Main Findings

The Parish Plan is titled "West Bergholt Future" and has a sub title of "moving forward together". It runs to some 40 pages and contains the following sections

About the Village

Producing the Plan

Survey Findings

8 subsections covering: *Social and Community; Environment; Village Amenities; Housing and Planning; Community Safety and Crime; Transport; Democracy; Taking the Plan Forward*

Each of the subsections contains a prioritised action plan which reflects the actions that households, businesses and village organisations saw as priority matters for the village. A major milestone was achieved in September 2008 when the plan was adopted by the Parish Council.

Following the adoption a workshop was held in December 2008 and a number of people from the village joined representatives from the steering group, the RCCE and the Parish Council to debate how the priority actions could be taken forward and which organisation was best placed to take the lead.

As a result of the workshop, three new members of the community joined the steering group and the group was reformed. The group has continued to meet monthly and has taken the results of the workshop and its own thoughts about the priority items for the coming year. The intention is that an annual monitor of progress will be published every year. There is no doubt that the Parish Plan has been able to focus attention on a number of priority matters for the village and has been instrumental in influencing the following areas where progress has been made:

Community: Formation of a thriving youth club: *Bergholt Youth Group*

Public Amenities: Extended operation of MUGA through planning application

Housing and Planning: Responding to CBC LDF; drafting of Village Design Statement

Community Safety and Crime: Provision of SID in Lexden Road

Transport: Information about public transport on Village website; survey of possible introduction of community bus for the village; responding to ECC speed management policy

Democracy: adoption of plan by Parish Council; dialogue with CBC and ECC; changes to Parish Council meetings

4 Next Steps

Now that the plan has been sent to the local and strategic planning authorities, there is a need to meet face to face with their representatives to see how some of the more aspiration ideas for the village can become reality, perhaps through the provision of grants. Areas of the plan which to be progressed later this year will include the commissioning of a Village Appraisal, the organization of an annual litter-pick and progressing the many transport related issues through a traffic sub committee which may report to the Parish Council.

5 Chairman's Conclusions

As Chairman of the Steering Group I am indebted to the help and support given to me by my fellow Steering Group members. Their unstinting enthusiasm has made the whole process of devising the plan a pleasure to oversee. At the same time it has been remarkable how many individuals, businesses and organisations have written in or responded to the various consultations. This undoubtedly has achieved a consensus on the way forward and I look forward to helping with the delivery of priority items in the plan. I would also like to thank the RCCE for making the grant available and the PC for helping to sponsor the work of the Steering Group. Although the Steering Group is now larger than at any time since its inception, I should like to thank Claire Cunningham for her time as Treasurer, and Catherine Bailey for being an able Secretary.