Parish Council Chairman’s report for the Annual Parish Meeting, Wix, 11th April 2016.

We are nearing completion of the first full year of our new council’s term of office and during this year, whilst we were seeking to establish a framework and structures within which we could work through giving each councillor a portfolio of specific projects and responsibilities, as always our main aim has been to “make a difference”.  By this I mean a positive difference to the village, its appearance, its infrastructure and of course to the lives of those who both live and/or work here.

What follows is a summary of our work this year, the success of what we have achieved will ultimately be judged by the residents and one of the prime purposes of this Annual Parish Meeting is for you to let us know:  what we have got right and wrong, what requires further work and what you would like us to do in the next and subsequent years.   In considering your feedback however, please be aware that on some issues there can be different views within the village.  Our responsibility as a Parish Council is to try to do the best for the village as a whole, which sometimes means we cannot please all the residents all of the time.   What I can assure you, is that we, your Parish Council will endeavour to work hard on your behalf, without recompense, other than the satisfaction of giving something to the community and seeing improvement in the quality of the life of the Village.

Just before giving the update of where we are now and what we want to do in the future, there is one thing I would like you to do for us.  The Parish Council are about to receive a pretty large sum of money (£28,000) from the Green Farm solar project and we would welcome suggestions from any residents who have ideas of how we could spend that money.  We cannot guarantee we will spend it on what you suggest, but when we do spend it we would like to think that we have considered all the options.

* **The playing field and grass cutting**

Over the past 12 months Wix Parish Council purchased a five gang diesel mower, predominantly for cutting the playing field grass.

Over the coming summer we plan to remove the willows on the ‘strip’ between the main field and the playground area and replant with specimen trees spaced so that we can get the mower between them.

We also plan to tidy up the trees and the mound area in the eastern corner of the field.

Councillor Bowers is investigating having the entire playing field professionally drained so that the area is usable throughout the year; once this is done we plan to install a path around the perimeter of the field which also connects to the MUGA and playground so that people can use the facilities all year round without getting covered in mud.

As tree warden I have attended training with TDC for recognising the signs and symptoms of Ash Dieback of which there is evidence on the village field; as and when the ash trees succumb to this disease they will be replaced with other more disease resistant trees.

The trees in the SW corner of the field behind the container will be thinned this year to allow the best to flourish. Where possible those removed will be replanted elsewhere on the field.

We hope to repaint the storage container a grassy shade of green sometime during the next 12 months.

* **Fireworks display working group**

We held the annual fireworks display on 5th November; the turnout was not as high as usual but the weather was dreadful! This year we hope for a better turnout as the display will be on a Saturday night; we can only hope for better weather. In 2015 we had a lot of ‘dud’ fireworks so for 2016 we are considering changing our supplier.

* **New Play Area**

As many of you know, we are currently in the process of creating a new play area for younger children. We were successful in securing a grant for £20,000 from Essex County Council’s Community Initiative Fund. We have received donations from the Harwich Runners, Wix Fayre and will be using our allocated Section 106 funds. We had also applied to Veolia Environmental Trust for £11,000, but sadly we were not successful in this bid. We continue to seek funding from alternative sources and subject to securing the funds, we hope to have the new play area, consisting of a tower with slide, roundabout and springers, complete by the end of the year.

* **LED streetlight upgrade**

Over the last 6 months, we have started the programme of upgrading our 32 parish owned street lights, from sodium to LED. So far 5 have been upgraded, with a further 5 ordered. An additional 5 will be replaced this financial year with a further 5 each year until they have all been upgraded.

* **Parish Magazine**

We relaunched the parish magazine, in conjunction with Wix - A Lovely Place to Live. Keep an eye out for this quarterly publication filled with parish council information, community news and interesting articles.

* **New Defibrillator**

In the last year Wix Parish Council received a community defibrillator supplied by the East of England Co-op. This has been fitted to the outside wall of the village hall and can be used under the 999 operator’s instruction should the need arise. There’s no need to panic though, the equipment is entirely automated, and it will not give a shock if one is not required.

* **Allotments**

We still have a number of plots available at our allotments on Colchester Road at excellent value of just £15.00 for a half plot, or £30.00 for a full plot. We are also looking for allotment holders to join with parish councillors in a committee to help run the site.

* **Small Grants fund**

Wix Parish council has made provision for funds to be made available in the form of grants in support of Wix clubs, organisations and groups. The funds will be offered as small grants. We wish to fund Wix groups that support social cohesion and deliver community wellbeing benefits through a common interest, to the residents of Wix.

Further details and application forms are available from the website or the Parish Clerk.

* **Communications**

Cllr Mitchell has been working on a new website, which she will talk about later. We have continued involvement with Essex County Council regarding the Superfast Broadband rollout. Don’t forget you can use their postcode checker at http://www.superfastessex.org/maps to find out if and when you should receive superfast broadband.

* **Everything else!**

Finally I would like to thank our regular volunteers who come to help the Parish Council unfailingly every time we ask for their help. In particular I would like to thank:

Tony Lungly for volunteering to drive the council mower and keep the field in good order throughout the year – when it is not too wet on the field!

Lou Reed for helping with the litter picking and again, anything else we ask him to help with.

Elizabeth Rankin for her year-round litter picking on Harwich Road and the village field; without her work I am sure that our environment would be a lot less pleasant than it is now.

Bob Jemmett. Bob helps with anything we ask whether it is mending a gate, servicing the lawn mower or pruning trees, Bob is always there to lend a hand.

Finally I would like to thank anyone and everyone else who helps us, your parish council in any way, large or small, with the work that we do for the village of Wix.

**Guy Nelson.**

**4th April 2016.**