



Our bus service seems to now be running without too many hiccups. The weekly Monday service which runs on a circular route through Eight Ash Green, Fordham and Aldham is providing our village with a very useful service, and I understand this is greatly appreciated by those wishing to shop at Tollgate.

Talks have been held previously between the Parish Council and the Village Hall Trustees with regard to the possibility of installing a defibrillator on the outside wall of the village hall. Grants are available from the British Hearts Foundation but up to the year ended March 2017 their grant monies had been exhausted. It is hoped, therefore, that we can proceed with a grant application now that the new financial year is here. A couple of our residents had suggested this to the Parish Council and I understand there are now several village halls in the area who now have this facility.

Once we are successful in getting the defibrillator installed, then we will be seeking volunteers to come forward to be trained in how to use it.

A meeting was held in October 2016 to publicise the fact that Aldham was considering formulating a Neighbourhood Plan. This was run by our ward councillors and as I was unable to attend, I was pleased to hear that this meeting was well attended. It is proposed that myself and Councillor Barber will during the coming months put the groundwork in to providing Aldham with a Neighbourhood Plan. This will help in many aspects of the future of our village with the main advantage being that we will be able to control our own destiny with regard to any future development plans. Further meetings will be held throughout the year in order that we can gauge the opinions of residents, so do please come along and voice your ideas and concerns when these meetings are held.

Following the sad passing of Tony Smith in 2015, a couple of our residents had suggested we plant a tree in the village in his memory. The Parish Council readily agreed to this and with the approval of Sharon Smith, Tony's widow, a small ceremony was held on Gallows Green on the 1<sup>st</sup> December, which was the anniversary of Tony's death. A beautiful oak tree was planted and a commemorative plaque installed. Subsequently daffodil bulbs have been planted – all in all a fitting tribute to a very well respected and much missed friend and colleague.

Our Ward Councillors were able to offer us the opportunity of applying for a grant from their Locality Budget. The sum of £2,000 is awarded to each of them who in turn are able to offer it to their various Parish Councils. It was therefore suggested that we offer the opportunity to the Village Hall Committee as they had a pressing need for extra storage. So, we were fortunate in obtaining a grant for £500 plus to enable a shed to be purchased. The monies have been received and the shed is soon to be installed at the rear of the hall.

Those of you who regularly use the playing field will have noticed that the wooden play structures have been taken out of use.

Each year we have a health and safety inspection carried out by Colchester Borough Council and following their recent inspection they had recommended we take this action due to the fact that 3 of the 4 posts supporting the whole structure were rotten and hollow in the middle.

The report has highlighted several areas where we need to have repair works carried out. None of the remaining ones are cause for concern – just general maintenance, and these will

be attended to over the next few weeks. As we only have another 5 years of our lease to run on the playing field, we will have to think carefully as to whether or not we can justify installing new play equipment on the field. It is going to cost some several hundred pounds to have the large wooden play centre removed and the area restored, so we will be having discussions over the next few weeks as to our way forward.

As you will have noticed I have a new Parish Clerk sitting by my side!

Back in December of last year, Olav Bradstock our clerk for some 6 years, gave in his notice as he and his wife, Pip, were moving out of the area. Very reluctantly I accepted Olav's resignation and we obviously wish him and Pip every success and happiness in their new home in Derbyshire.

So, the search for a new clerk had to be undertaken, and we were fortunate to receive 4 applications. After myself and Councillor Clive Bainbridge held an interview evening early this year, it was a unanimous decision that we offer Grahame the position of Parish Clerk for Aldham Parish Council.

I'm glad to say he accepted the offer and we welcome him to our team. Grahame lives in West Bergholt, so not a million miles away from Aldham and he can be contacted by telephone or e-mail.

However, if you do feel you need to turn up on his doorstep for whatever reason, then I know he would prefer you to make an appointment.

As is always the case, we have regular planning applications to deal with. Nothing very controversial, but each one is looked on and determined on merit.

The Highways and Byways continue to give us ongoing problems. Pot holes, verges being worn away, paths not being cleared and made safe, culverts that don't get cleared and cleaned.

We always act upon these problems and seek to get them addressed. However, we can only report the problems to the appropriate departments at Colchester Borough Council and Essex County Council, and as many of you will know who attempt to make your own contact over various matters, getting any response or definite action is very challenging.

The more calls the Councils get the better, so all of the problems which seem hard to solve, may be helped by people power, so do please tell us and we will act, but also be prepared to contact the Councils yourselves. The more they hear "Aldham" on the phone then the better and hopefully these niggly problems will get sorted, sooner rather than later.

Nearing the end of my report is always the pleasurable bit for me – and I guess all of you!!

This is the part where I pass on our thanks to the many residents who help us throughout the year. Peter Vesty who is our "Pothole Pete". He regularly walks the highways and byways and reports back to us. Sharon Tidey who lives in the cottage next to the playing field and who regularly empties and disposes of the rubbish from the bins, and to Brenda and John Brown our wombles, who can be seen come rain or shine clearing our village of rubbish. To you all we pass on our grateful thanks.

Many other residents help in many and various ways and we pass on our thanks to you all too.

You know who you are and there are too many to mention by name, but rest assured that your help is very valued and much appreciated. And finally, my thanks to my fellow Councillors. Clive Bainbridge, our vice chairman, Chris Hall, Barry Webber, Ann Honeyball, Adam Scott and John d'Angibau. I really couldn't do my job without their support and without the support of our Parish Clerk, and I look forward to getting to know Grahame and to working closely with him over the coming months.

### **Finance Report - 2016 / 2017**

The Accounts for 2016/17 are in the process of being compiled before being forwarded to the Internal Auditor. The accounts will be approved at the Parish Council AGM after which the documents will be sent to the External Auditors.

Total balances held by Aldham Parish Council as at 31 March 2017 is £16,637.32

It was agreed to discuss the purchase of a defibrillator for Aldham at the next parish council meeting.

### **Matters raised by Residents**

Resident: Do we have a timetable for a Neighbourhood Plan? Are we working with RCCE?

Cllr J. Daines – Chairman: We have no Neighbourhood Plan at present but could start to work towards one over the next 12 months. Local plan has no new development earmarked for Aldham.

CBC Barber – will aim to give a target date from RCCE.

Resident: Can I have a copy of the Aldham Playground Inspection?

Cllr J. Daines – Chairman: Yes, leave e mail address with the parish clerk and it will be sent to you. It will also be posted on the village website.

Resident: Can we remove the telephone box?

Cllr J. Daines – Chairman: The parish council would need to contact BT to remove box or it could be used as a site for defibrillator.

Resident: Can we cut back the nettles and brambles in Gallows Green?

Cllr J. Daines – Chairman: The parish council will organise this to be done asap.

Resident: Can we contact home owner in relation to damage being caused to Gallows Green due to heavy lorries turning during house renovations?

Cllr J. Daines – Chairman: The parish council will write a letter to the owners of the property concerned.

Resident: Why are the planning applications discussed by the parish council so inconsistent?

Cllr J. Daines – Chairman: Each application is discussed on its own merits by the parish council. No two planning applications are the same.

Resident: Can we have superfast broadband in Aldham?

Cllr J. Daines – Chairman: Issue with BT, 10% of parishioners have BT county broadband at present. Aldham has radio overlay suggesting that superfast broadband already exists. It is highly unlikely BT or any other company would be interested in supplying optical fibres to speed up broadband in village based on finances involved in doing so.

Signed..... Chairman                      Date.....

Meeting Closed at 9.15 p.m.