

Kersey Parish Plan Review 2014 Final Report

1. Introduction

Kersey completed a Parish Plan in 2008 following a huge amount of public consultation. The purpose of the original plan was to make the best of the resources available to the people in Kersey. An action plan covering the 5 year period from 2008 to 2013 was produced using the results of the public consultation, the action plan was regularly reviewed by the Parish Council and progress has been made with many action points. A copy of the original 2008 Parish Plan and the action plan showing progress made during the period is available to view on the Kersey website.

A Parish Plan takes into account the views of the whole community and reflects the local vision of how local residents would like to see the Parish change, improve and develop in the coming years. A Parish Plan can help everyone to participate in and contribute to improving social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing in the parish.

In 2013 it was agreed a Parish Plan Review should be carried out and a new Parish Action Plan created. It was agreed to carry out this review using plenty of public consultation and involvement to get the views of all residents in the parish. The Parish Plan and Parish Action Plan are community documents and it is not for the Parish Council to have to carry out all the points identified, but to help facilitate action and then monitor progress.

Since the Parish Plan was published in 2008 there have been no major changes to Kersey in terms of highways, housing, services and facilities. The population has remained fairly static at around 350, with an electorate of around 280.

2. The review process

In Spring 2014 articles were placed in the village newsletter, on all noticeboards around the parish and on the Kersey website explaining the review and inviting residents to help with the review.

Questionnaires were given to the primary school, pub, church and all village organisations. A questionnaire for individual residents was also made available on-line via the Kersey website, and paper copies were available in the Parish Council box in the Church. This was widely advertised around the parish and on the Kersey website. The questionnaires were created to gain an understanding about the number of volunteers working in the parish, where members live, their travel arrangements, their likes and concerns about the parish and any ideas for improvements.

A draft action plan was put together using points from the old action plan, adding new points to consider including items which regularly come up for discussion in 'parish time' at Parish Council meetings.

In April 2014 two widely advertised public consultation events were held where residents could see large printouts of the draft action plan and invited to give their views by writing comments on post-it notes and sticking them on the display sheets. There was also the opportunity to add comments about community assets and suggest new action points not already identified.

As part of the review the parish assets would be identified.

The responses to the questionnaires and those gathered at the public consultation events were analysed and a new Parish Action Plan put together based on these responses and comments.

3. Results of the consultation process

The parish assets have been identified as:

- Church
- School
- Village Hall
- Pub
- Footpath network
- Glebe and recreational facilities
- The Splash
- The beauty of the medieval village

Completed Questionnaire Responses

Village Organisations – replies received from 11 out of 14

They all make use of volunteers who are predominantly retired or over 65.

Support needed

Several organisations would like more parishioners to support and attend their meetings or events, some are struggling to survive due to lack of numbers.

Likes

Support for events, beautiful, historic surroundings, sense of continuation down the generations.

Small intimate village where most people know each other.

Village hall is spacious with good lighting.

Thriving primary school.

Concerns

Lack of car parking was a concern raised by 2 organisations who both meet in the village hall.

One organisation was concerned about village hall fees being increased, which may pose a problem.

Another group who meet in the village hall is only able to continue due to financial support from the Gray's Trust (another village organisation).

Improvements

More support at community events.

More young families in the village.

More interest in gardening and allotments.

Car parking.

No individual questionnaires were completed and returned from residents.

The Bell Inn

Employs 11 people (3 young people, 8 aged 25-50) who live in Kersey, surrounding villages and Hadleigh.

Support needed

The pub would like more support from local people, their customers mainly come from Hadleigh or further away.

Likes - Beauty of village, clean, country life, friendly.

Important to Pub - Local support, being centre point of village, functions, quiz nights etc.

Concerns

A lack of maintenance of properties in the village, owners should be encouraged to improve visual appeal as many properties look tired and let the village down.

No other attractions advertised or proposed.

No signage or info about buildings in parish which tourists would be interested in.

Improvements

To provide more public parking and to hold open garden days.

Kersey School

Employs 16 people (2 young, 9 aged 25-50, 5 aged 50-65) some living locally, some further away.

Uses 12 volunteers aged 25-50 mainly living in surrounding villages.

Travel to school is mainly by private cars.

Children attending the school mainly come from Kersey and surrounding villages and then some from Hadleigh and further away.

Support needed

Concerned about costly outgoings – the school pays for use of village hall, school house, car park.

If the village hall were to be redeveloped on a new site then it could be done in conjunction with school to provide both organisations with facilities which would better meet the needs of the school community, additional resources could be developed on this new site.

Would welcome greater involvement in school from local residents ie help with reading, sewing, craft, woodwork, gardening etc.

Likes

Lack of traffic, quiet location, relationship with church and parish, village support at school events.

Important to school

Church community – always accommodating and welcoming for school to use church.

Village location.

Safe environment, slower healthier pace of life for children, peaceful and friendly community.

Concerns

Lack of parking – would like a larger car park with safe path leading to school to reduce the risks of traffic to children.

The restricted school site is resulting in children being turned away which has an impact on staff retention due to funding being dependant on pupil numbers.

Overgrown area of land near the school/church car park and down beside the footpath into the village.

Improvements

Car park on the other side of the church and current car park partially used for extending the school.

The main points identified by the review group as a result of the questionnaire responses from village organisations, the school and pub were:

- They all like the beautiful, historic surroundings and friendly village life.
- All village organisations make use of volunteers who are predominantly retired or over 65.
- Village organisations, community events, the pub and church need to be supported.
- Car parking is a concern.

Consultation Event responses April 2014

Two drop in consultation events held in the village hall.

Saturday 5 April 10.30 - 11.30am and Monday 7 April 7pm - 8pm

The weather was warm and dry on both occasions.

The Monday evening session was immediately before the Annual Parish Meeting.

The events were widely publicised in Parish Newsletter, website and notice boards around parish.

Attendees were invited to read the proposed Parish Action Plan Points and to give their views by writing comments on post-it notes and sticking these on the large display sheets.

In total approx 27 people attended the consultation events. (7.76% of population).

Comments made on post it notes at the consultation events:

Affordable and Market Housing

No obvious need identified, last proposals were aimed at single people or couples, not families
A need should be identified before affordable housing is reconsidered
Availability of rental properties demonstrates no current need
Not a major priority
Surely there is a need in all villages
Rental property too expensive for average tenants, hence empty
There should be some small scale, appropriate development around the Parish

Planning and Development

We need to be more educated and involved
A planning seminar for residents run by the Parish Council might be useful
Planning is probably the most important role for the Parish Council
Exhibit applications and plans immediately before Parish Council meetings for public to view and invite comments from the public at the meeting

Cultural, Sporting and Recreational facilities

Lots of clubs going on in village, which makes it such a nice place to live **x2**
Book Club is a limb of Kersey Society
Most groups/clubs advertised in newsletter please read it and come along
Younger people need to be encouraged to join groups/clubs **x2**
Tends to be the same few people running several clubs in the village **x2**

Voluntary and Community Activity

Would support them if organised, good schemes **x4**
Social events should not become substitute for caring for those who need support

Public Transport

Regular bus service to Hadleigh would be useful **x4**
Bus service to Sudbury is OK but it takes a long route!

Traffic Management

No change to speed limits in parish **x12**
Parked cars in village keep traffic speeds down **x2**
Change to limits would be unenforceable **x3**
Use school to lower speed limit to 20 mph
20mph on Cherry Hill

Parking

Church Hill a particular problem, parking on corner dangerous **x3**
School time a problem, additional carpark near school would be an asset
Parking disfigures village but yellow lines and signs could be worse! So low priority **x2**
School parents should leave Church Walk free of cars
Please continue to monitor

Shopping & Services

Shop in village not viable **x6**
Shop would be asset to village if right premises & business backing found
Something to replace the Pottery would be nice

Natural Environment - Dog Bins

More dog bins

Some improvement seen but some owners could do better **x 4**

Natural Environment - Appetite for working groups to tidy village

Footpath group do an excellent job

Informal approach best

Invite residents to tidy village twice a year

Think that residents would be happy to look after designated patch

Perhaps areas could be allocated on a rota like the playground mowing

Picking up litter on dog walks is ongoing!

Natural Environment - improve footpath links between Vale Lane and centre of village

Great idea **x9**

Need ideas to raise funds

Don't destroy hedgerows/banks in process

Wheelchair access?

Access to Information – Create public internet access point in village

Pub suggested as venue previously - what thoughts now?

The Bell wi-fi rarely works so perhaps they need support to get that working

No priority - no longer required

Access to Information - Creation of village website

Excellent website **x4**

Website needs more publicity **x3**

emailing list with updates would be good

Never used it!

Access to Information - improve Broadband speed

All responses said high Priority **x18**

Of those responses:

Kersey Tye & Uplands desperate for better speeds **x8**

Apparently there is fibre in the cabinet on Vale Lane triangle but no links **x 2**

General frustration by delay and lack of communication as to when speeds will improve

One commented that it is better than 3-4 years ago

Businesses and students badly affected by poor speeds and unreliable connections

Access to Information - Improve mobile phone reception

High Priority - **x7**

Medium priority **x2**

Comment that signals need boosting by 'link' aerial

Vodafone works on Church Hill

O2 works in The Street, all work at the Church

Orange doesn't work between post box on The Street & Leys House on Church Hill

Local Democracy - Keeping the Parish Plan alive in the community

No comments

Local Democracy - 2 vacancies on Parish Council & low public attendance at meetings

Review the 'Parish Time' method to encourage more participation at meetings

Question as to why there is reluctance to participate and become Parish Councillors/attend meetings?

What can be done to encourage wider involvement in Parish Council matters

Other items not already identified

Hedgerows - too many seem to have been lost/deteriorated. Could local landowners be encouraged to restore/replant and use more traditional methods of hedge maintenance?

Comments made about Village Hall

Village hall is a great facility, perhaps needs better advertising locally outside village to promote use

Kitchen could be more appropriate for catering - can't cope with hot meals for more than about 50

Acoustics not good at events with lots of people

Comments made about The Pub

Community buy out? X1

4. Information to be included in the new Parish Action Plan using the feedback from the questionnaires and public consultation events

The information and feedback gained from the questionnaires and public consultations were discussed by the review group relating to each heading in the proposed Parish Action Plan.

Affordable Housing and Market Housing should be split into 2 separate points.

Affordable Housing

The availability of rental properties in the village was discussed. The average rent is probably too high for families who may need help with affordable housing. There was a discussion about the definition of affordable housing; apparently it is when properties are rented out at 80% of the market rent. According to an on-line search carried out during the week of 26 September 2014 there were only two empty properties available for rent. It was recognised that there may be a need for affordable housing, but a need has not actually been identified in Kersey at present. It was agreed this situation should be monitored.

Market Housing

It was agreed that some comments should be included in this section to give the Parish Council some guidance when considering future planning applications taking into account the wishes of the whole parish. It was agreed it would be a valuable exercise to ask residents what they think about planning and development in the parish.

Planning and Development

It was felt it would be helpful to provide an A4 sheet giving information to residents setting out the role of the Parish Council regarding planning regulation and once e-planning is introduced how parishioners can access the information on-line. Also information to help residents understand what needs planning permission and the requirements when living in a Conservation Area.

Cultural, Sporting and Recreational Facilities

There are many well established village organisations covering a wide variety of interests, however some need more support to ensure they continue. The Kersey website should be up to date with contact information for all the village organisations. The Parish Council role is only to help facilitate clubs and activities in the parish not to run them. There was a concern that many of the organisations, activities and social events in the village are run by volunteers who are predominantly retired or over 65. More volunteers need to be encouraged to help, particularly younger people. Life has changed and many younger people tend to work full time, they are happy to help with specific events on a one-off basis but there seems to be a reluctance to make a longer term commitment. It was agreed that the action for this section was really just to monitor things.

Voluntary and Community Activity – Good Neighbour Scheme or Volunteer Driving Scheme

Parishioners seem happy with support on an informal level. If a formal scheme were to be introduced the Parish Council would be supportive. It was suggested that there may be a commercial opportunity for The Pub to offer a regular social event with traditional pub games, drinks, coffee, food etc.

Public Transport

There is still a need for some public transport for those that do not have access to a car.

Traffic Management

There is still some concern about the speed of traffic travelling through the centre of the village and down Cherry/Church Hill, could investigate the new SCC 20mph policy, however parked cars do help to slow traffic. There was little support for a change in speed limits identified at the public consultation events.

Parking

There are still concerns about the inconsiderate parking in the village, particularly by school parents. The police have supported the Parish Council in encouraging residents and visitors to park safely but more needs to be done. As identified in the consultations more car parking space is something that needs to be investigated.

Shopping and Services – Community Shop

It was agreed to delete this section from the Parish Action Plan as a community shop would not be viable now that there is a new out of town supermarket in Hadleigh and internet shopping and home delivery is readily available for Kersey residents.

Natural Environment - Dog Litter bins

Dog fouling on public footpaths, particularly near the main residential areas, is still a problem. This seems to be caused by a minority of inconsiderate dog owners. The action point will be to investigate other locations for dog litter bins, put another note in the newsletter reminding dog owners of their responsibilities and continue to monitor the situation.

Natural Environment – Appetite for working groups to tidy the village

The Footpath Working Group were congratulated for the excellent work they do to keep the Kersey footpath network in such good condition, more residents should be encouraged to join the Footpath Working Group. The idea of asking residents to take on areas they would like to keep tidy through-out the year would be investigated.

Natural Environment – to improve footpath links between Vale Lane and the centre of the village

There was considerable support for this initiative identified by the consultations. This is a project the Parish Council is working on but sources of funding will need to be identified.

Access to Information – Public internet access point in the village

There was virtually no support for this identified in the public consultation and since technology has moved on considerably since 2008 it was agreed that this action point should be deleted.

Access to Information- creation of a website

The website needs more publicity so all parishioners make use of it; however, those who use it find it informative.

Access to Information – Improve Broadband speed/provision in the parish

This point had the most responses and was considered a high priority by all who responded. The parish is served by 2 different exchanges, Hadleigh and Boxford. There were several responses from people on the Boxford exchange reporting particularly poor speed and dropping connections. Small businesses and students are badly affected by poor speeds and unreliable connections. Our County Councillor Jenny Antill has been keeping the PC informed about progress of the SCC project to improve broadband.

Access to Information – Improve mobile phone reception/coverage in the parish

This was generally considered a high priority, the reception varies depending on location and phone provider, with the poorest reception in the lower areas of the village near The Splash. Could investigate the Vodafone sure signal option.

Local Democracy – Keeping the Parish Plan alive in the community

The Parish Plan is an important document for the parish and will continue to be updated and reviewed every 5 years with an action plan setting out those things parishioners feel need attention.

Local Democracy – The Parish Council

There is still a vacancy on the Parish Council. Comments from the consultation were that members of the parish need to be encouraged to engage with the Parish Council, consider becoming Councillors or take an active interest and involvement in Parish Council matters. The Parish Council could review the 'Parish Time' method to encourage more participation at meetings.

5. Final points to note and summary

Having identified the parish assets these need to be supported and nurtured so they are there for future generations to enjoy. Keeping the parish tidy, having a welcoming appearance and promotion of tourism would help support these assets and ties in with many of the Parish Action Plan points, particularly for the natural environment.

Encouraging and supporting volunteers in the parish is an important area identified as part of this review. The review has shown that most volunteers are in the 65+ age group. More needs to be done to encourage younger people to consider volunteering and becoming more involved in community events and activities in the parish. Doing this would strengthen community spirit and involvement in events and activities in the parish.

During the process of this Parish Plan Review, despite widely advertising and asking for community involvement only members of the Parish Council and the Parish Council Clerk came forward to form the review group. There was little enthusiasm from residents in the parish to get involved and help shape the future of our parish.

Working on the Parish Action Plan points will help achieve many of the desires identified in the original 2008 Parish Plan and this review.

This Parish Plan Review document and the new Parish Action Plan to cover the period 2015 to 2020 will be available to view on the Kersey website.