

Reports for the Annual Parish Meeting – Not held due to Covid 19 Lockdown

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

April 2020

Our Clerk Helen Frayer continued to once more raise the level of governance of the council. Helen took over the role of Responsible Finance Officer in May 19, which is quite usual for smaller councils and sits better with her responsible for administering the accounts. I would like to thank Helen on behalf of myself and my fellow Councillors for all the dedicated hard work she has put in during the year.

The election in May was uncontested and we had one new councillor Joel Pailes and one vacant position. Mike Gamble and Andrew Goodings did not stand for re-election. I would like to thank both Mike Gamble and Andrew Goodings for their long and dedicated service to the parish.

At the annual council meeting held in May, Nick Kemp was elected Vice Chairman and Playing Field Officer, Joel Pailes was elected Highways Officer and Alan Goodings agreed to continue to liaise with our verge cutting contractors.

The vacancy was advertised, and Gemma Minors was co-opted in June, but resigned in November. I would like to thank Gemma for her short service. The vacancy was advertised again, and we then had three applications to join the council and Louise Downton was co-opted in February.

The Council has continued through the year to try and maintain the Village Hall to a high standard, as it continues to be popular with groups and individuals from the village and adjoining parishes.

Our Booking Clerk Rachael Mold continues with a very proactive and enthusiastic approach to her role. I would like to thank Rachel for their efforts during the year.

The letting income from the Village Hall is a major income stream for the Council. The Booking Clerk report showed that our hire rates continue to be some of the most reasonable in the area. Therefore, the charges were not increased this year, but will be reviewed annually.

The flat roof sections of the Village Hall continue to be a problem with leaks and a number of repairs have been carried.

During the year we had to terminate the contract with the cleaning contractor appointed in 2018 due to non-attendance and poor performance. A new contractor Dream Team Clean was appointed and to date we have not had any issues or complaints.

The licensee of the Buck Public House at Morley continues to provide a licenced bar at the Village Hall when required.

The Playing Field and the children's play area continues to be enjoyed by parishioners of all ages. A new outdoor table tennis table was installed, some of the play equipment was painted and goal nets installed.

We have just been notified by Norse, our ground maintenance contractor for the playing field, that they are going through a reorganisation and will cease our maintenance at the end of March. A new contractor will have to be found.

The allotments continue to be enjoyed by parishioners, including the community plot. They are all let and there is currently a small waiting list. The 2 larger plots and the field continue being cultivated for commercial use.

Shortly after the village sign was rebuilt, following being damaged by a car accident, it was damaged again, and the council had to get the brick plinth repaired. The costs were covered by an insurance claim.

The Council once again undertook the verge cutting in the parish, together with the areas of grass which are maintained within the village, with the County Council paying the parish council for taking responsibility for these activities.

The Council's hedges and verges policy has seen the Council write to or personally contact a number of property owners requesting that they maintain their hedges and verges where they are impeding users of the

highway. The County Council's Highways department continues to be involved with one home owner who does not maintain their hedge and carries out additional planting and places obstacles on the highways verge.

The Council worked in collaboration with the School and District Councillor with funding towards a defibrillator cabinet, so the School's defibrillator could be located outside and made available to the public.

The Council worked in collaboration with the School, Friends of Wicklewood School and County Councillor with funding towards flashing 20mph signs at the school and a SAM2 flashing speed sign, which would be moved around three pre-approved locations to record speeds and flash when vehicles are over 30mph.

The Council submitted a bid to the Parish Partnership Scheme to fund extending the footpath provided by the new development in High Street to its junction with Wymondham / Hackford Rd. This is a 50/50 funding and will allow the footpath to be built in 2020/21

The precept for 2020/21 has been substantially increased to cover the one off cost of the footpath and some pending maintenance items at the Village Hall, but it was agreed to review the precept for the following year to reduce it to nearer the previous rate if possible. Wicklewood had stood alone in being the cheapest parish of its size in South Norfolk, and even with the increase we believe it will still be the cheapest.

More recently the council has been looking into a renewable heat technology system for the Village Hall as a replacement solution for the oil boiler, which is nearing the end of its life. The Council are looking into the up-front costs being funded by a loan and then covering the cost of the loan from the Governments Non- Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive, with the aim of the scheme being cost neutral over 20 years. This would also put Wicklewood Village Hall at the forefront of local communities for their recognition of the need to move away from Fossil-Fuelled heating.

I would like to thank my fellow Councillors for all their hard work during the year, particularly those who have special responsibilities. Nick Kemp for overseeing the playing field, Joel Pailes for overseeing Highways. I would also like to thank Richard Goodings for carrying out a number of maintenance items at the Village Hall and John Hipperson and Alan Goodings who have contributed to discussions and the working of the council during the year.

Lastly, it has been brought to my attention that Alan Goodings has completed over 50 years as a Parish Councillor for Wicklewood. We are not sure how many years, but this is something we need to look into and acknowledge. Well done Alan.

Report from District Councillor

We are living in unprecedented times. In the past we have been able to see and understand our emergencies eg. Snowed in, flooded, electricity cuts, and have been able to dig our way out, go and get sand bags or get the generator going and heat water to fill flasks so people could have hot drinks to keep them warm.

With this Coronavirus we do not know if it is around our villages or not, we have many residents who are vulnerable due to their age, medical condition or family circumstances and the usual pool of local volunteers is different because people who would normally help out in these circumstances have had to self isolate for a variety of reasons.

Having said that, although large numbers of volunteers have come forward across the country there does not seem to be a great demand for their help in local villages. Local people and communities seem to be fairly self-sufficient and are looking after each other, whilst still 'keeping their distance'.

In Norfolk we have two main groups co-ordinating the support work. Gold Command co-ordinated by a senior NCC officer, Tom McCabe, and Silver Command co-ordinated by Chief Police Officer, Simon Bailey. They are co-ordinating staff and volunteers to support residents by:

- 1, moving bulk supplies, delivering food, Personal protection Equipment, etc,
- 2, assisting NHS in clearing wards and moving patients to safer venues to make way for Coronavirus victims, preparing buildings for possible overflow from Coronavirus wards and setting up mortuary space.
- 3, supporting schools who are opening for children of key workers but also providing homework and activities to keep children who are locked down at home occupied and supplying 'school meals' to those who need it.

Many staff whose roles have ceased for the time being have been redeployed helping customer services to answer phones (some days we have had 800 calls) assisting social workers, helping wherever demand is increasing.

Libraries, museums, theatres and individuals are streaming all sorts of entertainment and activities to try to keep children and adults occupied and active and provide distractions from anxiety, stress and loneliness. Adult Learning, previously Adult Education, is currently offering over 100 different courses on line with support from tutors. Courses range from vocational and qualification to hobbies, learning new skills and IT/technology. Some courses are free whilst others offer free taster sessions.

Norfolk County Council Cabinet meets electronically every week plus each member is in touch with their services to help in any way possible.

What a difference from the previous year or even the previous month.

Annual Report

Last May NCC wanted to focus on growing the economy, regeneration, developing skills and employment opportunities, creating strong communities and protecting the environment, so we launched Together for Norfolk, an inclusive plan, which involves working with voluntary, community, business and public sector leaders to prepare Norfolk for the future.

Over the last year we have gradually been working towards these aims and trying to find ways of making our budget work more efficiently whilst still providing the services required.

When the budget was agreed, earlier this year, it included a 3.99% increase in Council Tax – 2% to cover increased cost pressures within Adult Social Care and 1.99% to cover general increases in the cost of other services. The cost of Adult and Children’s Social Care represents 70% of NCC’s overall annual spend.

Last year we had 1,121 looked after children – the number is gradually going down – and we carried out 41,570 Adult Social Care Assessments for 18,925 people.

Children’s Services

There are 13,150 young people with SEND (Special Needs and Disabilities) in Norfolk.

We are about to create 142 new learning places in 10 mainstream schools for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities plus we also have plans to build four new SEND schools so that children can be educated locally and not spend hours in a taxi travelling to and from school. This will also reduce travelling costs.

Adult Learning

The Adult Learning Service was recently inspected by Ofsted and was assessed as Good. The service was praised for their ‘effective curriculum that meets the needs of the local community and employers’.

Adult Services

Norfolk has a higher number of disabled people than other counties. It is estimated that about 20% of the population has a disability or long term illness.

A new Life Opportunities Framework is being developed to support those with learning disabilities to develop life skills and, if possible, find work.

The new framework will have three pathways;

Wellbeing – providing meaningful activity for those with complex needs,

Promoting independence – supporting people to develop life skills and access community provision and services

Skills and Employment – supporting people to obtain paid employment.

The Homes for Norfolk programme aims to increase the supply of extra care housing, independent accommodation with social care support on site.

Highways

Norfolk County Council provided £401,000 towards 153 Parish Partnership applications. With matched funding provided by the parishes this will bring together £919,000 of investment in local schemes.

During the year 155 staff transferred to NORSE Group which took over road maintenance, repairing potholes, drainage, sign repairs and gritting. Tarmac will continue surfacing construction and highways improvements.

The routes for dually the A47 and completing the Norwich Western Link (NDR) have been agreed and work should begin in 2021/22.

Broadband

Better Broadband for Norfolk, a partnership between NCC, Government and Openreach to improve coverage across Norfolk should be completed in 2020. Norwich is one of 29 new locations to be selected to benefit from Openreach's nationwide investment programme.

Libraries

Libraries continue to offer a wide range of activities for all ages from Bounce and Rhyme for babies to board games and knit and natter for older people. The Forum library is fifth in the country for the highest number of visitors and issues the most books each year – (950,384 in 2019). It is now possible for library members to get ebooks and also get their magazines and newspapers electronically via their membership.

Museums

All museums are busy and well attended. The Castle Museum has obtained grants (£13.5m) and completed all the preliminary planning for changing the Castle Keep back to how it looked in medieval times. Building work should have begun but has been held up due to the Coronavirus. It should have been completed by Easter 2021. Once complete it will be the most accessible grade one listed medieval castle in Europe. It is believed it will increase the visitor numbers to 300,000 per year and boost the local economy.

The Arts

The first ever Norfolk Creativity and Wellbeing Week was held in 2019. It showcased how different organisations work together to make arts and culture available to all and offered talks, workshops, open days, performances and activities across the county. It had been hoped to repeat it this year.

Housing

NCC has planning approval to build 137 homes in Acle via its company Repton Homes. This will include 45 affordable units and shared ownership homes. There will also be a further 200 homes in Hopton to help fill the housing need and raise funding for NCC.

Recycling

Just before Christmas NCC opened another shop at Snetterton recycling centre. We already have six other shops at Dereham, Caister, Wells, Bergh Apton, Heacham and Wereham. The shops donate a proportion of the money raised to charity – currently East Anglian Air Ambulance.

Zero Carbon Target

NCC has started to identify activities needed to help reduce our environmental impact. As a start we are only using recycled paper in photocopiers, coffee machines will no longer be using plastic cups and we are looking to gradually change the pool cars to electric.

It has also been agreed to work with communities, landowners and farmers to plant one million trees around Norfolk over the next five years to reduce carbon levels, benefit wildlife and provide valuable green space to improve the lives of residents in years to come.

Boundary changes

Over the last few months the Boundary commission has been looking at the make up of the council Divisions to try to balance the size of the population that each member represents. As there have been large developments in some areas there will be some boundary changes with some villages being moved into neighbouring Divisions.

The future

Dealing with the Coronavirus has completely disrupted the council's work and budget plans. We have to respond to current needs and, like everyone else, we have no idea how long this will continue or when we will be able to get back on track.

Parish Councils

I endeavour to attend all Parish council meetings but occasionally I have to miss one due to another meeting somewhere else. Parish clerks know that they can contact me anytime if there is a problem that I can help with.

Margaret Dewsbury
Hingham Division

Wicklewood Poor Firing Allotment Charity Report to Annual Parish Meeting 6th April 2020

- The Income of the charity in 2019 was £202.27
- At Christmas 2019 the charity made grants of £67 each to three applicants.
- The charity's assets are held in 398 COIF Charities Investment Fund Income units which at 30th June 2019 had a value of £6476.46.

MJW Gamble
Secretary and Treasurer
06.04.20

Head Teacher's Report for the Parish Council, April 2020

Wicklewood Primary School and Nursery continues to be a thriving village school and at this time more than ever has reaffirmed why I am so proud to be the headteacher. The staff, children, governors and parents have been incredibly supportive of one another during this unprecedented time and I know that I am not alone in saying that I miss the buzz of the day to day routines, the conversations and most of all the fun and laughter.

This year we have seen many changes in education with the emphasis shifting towards a more creative curriculum and a new criterion for OFSTED. Thankfully we were ahead of the game. Our curriculum has always been balanced and ensured that every child had their opportunity to shine whatever the subject. Staff work tirelessly to provide innovative, engaging and exciting ways to learn, embracing change and trying new things for the benefit of all stakeholders. At present staff are adding a variety of learning

and activities to the school website to ensure that the children continue to develop the much-needed skills for lifelong learning.

The School Council continue to come up with new ideas as to how they would like to improve the school and their contributions make a significant difference. This year the focus has been on the continued development of our wildlife area.

Events this year have been; Harvest Festival; a Key Stage 2 Carol Service; Christmas and Summer fayres and Summer BBQ; Christmas and Summer term plays; Sports Day and various sporting tournaments, including tag rugby, athletics and cross country; Road Safety days and Cycling Proficiency; trips to Norwich Castle and Norwich Cathedral, and the Dinosaur Park; and residential opportunities to Holt Hall; Hilltop, Sheringham; and the Peak District.

The school motto, 'Be the Best You Can Be' embodies everything that we do. This year it seems apt that we have linked our school values to British Values. During the weeks and months to come our values of Respect, Understanding, Courage, Happiness, Happiness, Friendship, Responsibility, Acceptance, Self-belief and Thoughtfulness will most definitely be tested. As the Queen said in her speech on Sunday: we will succeed; we will be with our friends again; we will be with our families again; and we will meet again. I hope that her words were reassuring and inspiring to all our families at the school.

Please stay safe.

Julia Brooks
(Headteacher)