

Chairman's Report to the Annual Parish Meeting 5th May 2021

This is the first chairman's report since May 2019 owing to the Covid restrictions which led to the cancellation of the 2020 Annual Parish Meeting.

During the first lock down Parish Councils were not allowed to meet and consequently Playford PC voted by email to delegated powers to the clerk and chairman for any decisions which needed to be made during the period of the Covid emergency including financial decisions up to £1000. It was agreed that if the relevant legislation came through from the government then Playford PC would hold virtual meetings. It took some time for this legislation to come through and for the August and November meetings after restrictions were lifted, we met in the Church. For all meetings since November we have met virtually via Zoom which actually proved more successful than most of us thought. Unfortunately, after this week Parish Councils will no longer be allowed by law to hold meetings virtually.

In July 2019 we had to say goodbye to Tim Llewellyn who was moving out of the village and in March 2020 Mike Brewer also stood down for the same reason. But then in August 2020 Martin Hill joined and was welcomed to the Parish Council.

Probably one of the most significant happenings during the last two years has been the rise and fall of the Northern Bypass. Finally at the end of January 2020 SCC leader Matthew Hicks stated that no more work would be done towards the project as he could not continue without widespread local support. Three other local councils and our two local MP's opposed the scheme. This decision was later confirmed at SCC's cabinet meeting in February 2020.

Precept

In January 2020 the parish council voted to raise the precept by £500 and again in January 2021 the council decided it had to raise it again by a further £1500. These increases reflect the increased costs in the upkeep of the village. These include increases in the cost of grass and hedge cutting and the keeping of the drainage ditches and culverts clean.

Projects

During the last two years, various improvements have been made around the village.

The drains on the C324 have been unblocked and we understand that there will be a maintenance schedule planned for keeping them clear in the future.

Flagship have reconfigured the area around the entrance to FP7. They have put in new drains and edged the footpath with curb stones. Unless there is a major deluge, water should not now flood down the footpath.

The culvert outside the village hall has been dug out by Norse but paid for by the Parish Council. Binders were engaged to clear the drain underneath the entrance to the village hall and the ditch and drain on the corner of Hill Farm Road was cleared. The slightly dangerous drop into the culvert on the left hand side of the entrance has been cleared and covered with

wooden decking and a wooden dam has been created to prevent too much debris getting into the drain and blocking the pipe again. The Parish Council is indebted to Sam Webber for this work.

Two new Grit Bins have been bought and located at the entrance to the church car park and the junction of Church Lane and Church Road.

The bare rooted oak tree which was planted in March 2019 subsequently died. The replacement which was sent free of charge and planted in December 2019 also died. Both due to the severe lack of roots on the supplied trees. The company who supplied the trees was not prepared to send another so we applied for further funding and are now we are waiting the delivery of a potted replacement.

During the last two years the PC has joined the SAVID scheme. For those of you not knowing what SAVID stands for, it is 'Safer Village Driving'. We now have share in the usage of the Speed Indicator Device (SID) which was purchased in 2019. The proposed installation sites are on the C324 outside Clematis Cottage and outside the village hall.

Grass Cutting

Norse are continuing to cut the grass and hedges and doing it well. The daffodils we planted in 2018 have increased in numbers and this year there was a really lovely display.

Planning Applications

Over the last two years we have had 7 new planning applications. We supported 4 of them and objected to 3. All of the applications were given planning permission by East Suffolk Council.

Footpaths

There have been a lot of improvements to the footpaths but the problems with FP20 & FP1 seem to continue but seem to be mostly due to the natural springs creating very wet boggy areas. As always if any new problem areas arise please do not hesitate to contact Marian.

Neighbourhood Plan

The plan is scheduled to be completed as a draft document sometime later this year. Progress has been held up by Covid and the various lockdowns and restrictions and also by East Suffolk departments working from home.

History Project

Unfortunately this project has not gone forward at all. The records offices have been closed and there has been little opportunity for the history group to meet. Hopefully this will be rectified later this year.

Much has been achieved in the last two years despite the restrictions due to Covid and the associated lockdowns. Let's hope the July meeting will be in the village hall and back face to face. As always a copy of this report will be posted on the website together with the minutes of this meeting.