

## **Bacton Parish Council 2023-24 Report to Annual Parish Meeting 13th May 2024.**

I am sorry that a family funeral in Cornwall prevents me from chairing this meeting and presenting my report in person but I am grateful to Councillor Paul Wigglesworth for standing in my stead.

Our new Clerk Suzy Lupin was appointed in April and is the first to reside in the village since the late John Bean was in post.

May 2023 saw the election of a new Council with Julie Bonner, David Chambers, Philip Jeffries, Vanessa Kingsley, Graham MacAusland, Gail Wigglesworth and Paul Wigglesworth elected unopposed. Once again there were too few nominations to require an election so John Kingsley and James Steed were co-opted in the following months to bring the council up to its full membership of nine.

Vice Chairman Philip Jeffries was thanked for his 16 years of service when he resigned in September. He was succeeded by Vanessa Kingsley and Paul Merry was later co-opted to bring the Council back to full strength..

The Council has continued to comment on planning applications as they arise. Of particular concern has been Suffolk County Council's application for housing on the former Middle School site which has excluded the commitment to a new Primary School as agreed in the Outline Planning Consent. The Council has previously opposed the application and the matter will be discussed again at its meeting on 20 May.

The Council continued to carry out improvements and repairs including new street signs at Tailors Green and Shop Green, more No Parking notices on various grassed areas and new fencing alongside the churchyard ditch on Church Road.

The play equipment at St Mary's playing field has been enhanced with the provision of Five a side goals. Sadly the seesaw, roundabout, climbing frame and zip wire were vandalised with graffiti around the time of a similar incident in Cotton.

Work on the layout of the paths in the adjacent Garden of Reflection have been completed with planting planned in the next few months.

The last unreserved plots in the cemetery were filled during the year and the first two burials in the new cemetery took place.

Traffic speeds and Road Safety has always been high on the agenda of the Council and a survey helped inform work on traffic calming measures and improved pedestrian routes with Suffolk Highways and the resultant works should be completed by the autumn.

The exceptional flooding experienced during the winter led to the formation of a full Council Task Force including local District and County councillors. Work continues on mapping the rainwater and sewage networks along with further survey to identify all the areas impacted. The Council has reminded landowners of their responsibilities in respect of ditch clearance and maintenance. The performance of the Sustainable Drainage System designs for the new housing developments in the village has been questioned and raised with planning enforcement at Mid Suffolk District Council. Suffolk Highways are also regularly contacted to clear blocked road drainage gulleys.

The Council is now working on a formal Neighbourhood Plan for Bacton and a village wide survey had an excellent response in identifying the priorities for future needs of the village. This has highlighted concerns about the capacity of our health service, school and public utilities to cope with the growing population resulting from the 400 new homes currently being built. This also identified the sport and leisure facilities people would like to see locally and the Plan will be offering suggested locations and investment proposals to meet those aspirations.

The various policies and practices of the Council have been the subject of a detailed review to bring them into line with the latest national requirements.

National celebrations are an essential part of village life and the Council organised the Coronation Concert and Tea Party on the School playing field last May. The next month will see the erection of the Village Beacon in time for the D-Day National Beacon lighting on 6th June. The plinth supporting the beacon has been constructed and donated by Taylor Wimpey for which the Council is very grateful. The formal handover of the open space at Beacon Green to the Parish Council should take place during the coming year. The Council is also supporting the annual village fete at Bacton Manor this year.

Until Christmas, Council donated Parish Magazine subscriptions to all new arrivals in the village and continues to support local organisations with occasional grants which included the Bowls Club and Village Hall this year.

With a recent change in legislation, the Council has been able to fund the repairs to the church footbridge which is used as a main pedestrian route to the Primary School and beyond to the Health Centre, Bull and Shop Green.

The role of the Parish Warden is important in helping keep our village safe and tidy. The Council recently thanked Dave Green for his work on his retirement and he has been succeeded by Pete Bonner.

This will be my last report as Chairman of the Parish Council as I will be standing down after three years in the role and seven years as a councillor. It has been a great privilege to serve the community that welcomed Diana and me so warmly in 2015. I hope to continue to be involved in bringing the Neighbourhood Plan to fruition.

I know I leave the work of the Council in the safe hands of committed colleagues and wish them and the new Chairman every success in the future.

David Chambers  
May 2024