

CLOPTON PARISH COUNCIL
CHAIRMAN'S REPORT for the Year
2021 to 2022

Parish Council Meetings

Six regular meetings of the parish council were held during the year as scheduled

The May meeting was held via zoom but I'm pleased to say that all subsequent regular parish council meetings were held in person at the village hall.

Changes

We still have one vacancy for a Parish Councillor.

In July 2021 following the county council elections we were very pleased to welcome Councillor Elaine Bryce as our new County Council representative for the Carlford ward. Elaine has been extremely supportive of this Parish and I will speak more of this later.

Accounts

Total receipts for the year 2021 / 2022 amounted to £4,524.81, of which £4,500 came from the Precept.

On the expenditure side the total gross expenditure for the 2021 /2022 financial year was higher than last year and amounted to £6,083.54.

General Reserves at 31 March 2022 were £5,306.13 and earmarked reserves were £1,722.84 making a total of £7028.97, a fall of £1,558.73 over the year.

The annual accounts were submitted to the Internal Auditor, and I am pleased to tell you, a clean report was received.

We did not increase our precept last year, however, in order to budget for the future, we have increased the precept slightly for this current financial year.

This is to budget for future expenses, in particular for legal fees relating to the renewal of the village hall lease. Although the lease will not require renewal for another 20 odd years, by putting a little aside every year we plan to ensure that we are fully financed next time.

The precept for 2022-2023 has therefore been increased slightly to £4,750 for the year.

Planning Applications

Seven planning applications were received during the year, of which five were permitted, and two were refused. Clopton Parish Council supported all of these applications

At the 2019 Annual Parish Meeting we were presented with a proposal for a new vision for the Clopton Commercial Park on the old Debach Airfield. The new vision was aimed towards encouraging smaller start-up businesses with a community feel and the potential to provide

a greater variety of employment opportunities that would be accessible to members of our village. The Parish Council gave our wholehearted support to this proposal which we felt would be an asset to ours and also surrounding villages. We believed this would attract the correct type of commercial development for this area. At the time a planning application was submitted but subsequently withdrawn.

In 2021 a new application for this development was submitted and again this was supported by the Parish Council

In November at the request of the Parish Council, I attended the East Suffolk Planning Committee Meeting and spoke in support of this development and the benefits it could bring to the community. However, despite some positive comments from several committee members and despite strong support from the East Suffolk Council's economic development team the proposals were rejected.

Clopton Parish Council also made a submission to The Infrastructure Planning Inspectorate, Sizewell C Enquiry. This was to draw attention to the impact the Sizewell C proposals would have on the village due to the increased traffic passing through the village on the B1078 and B1079.

The gist of our submission was that the minor traffic mitigation measures and road improvements agreed with Suffolk County Council and proposed for the village, and also for our neighbouring villages, were totally inadequate.

We wanted to make the point that this was because Suffolk County Council did not fully understand and appreciate the particular challenges that the B roads through our village presented.

That in order to rectify this EDF and Suffolk County Council should work together on more ambitious plans to improve road safety through the village and other villages impacted by the proposals.

If Sizewell C is dropped, it'll be in a large part, because of the Clopton Parish Council's Concerns over road Safety during the Construction phase.

Events, Topics & Issues

Litter Pick:

The residual impact of Covid restricted what we felt appropriate to organise. However as things are returning to normal, we hope to repeat this activity this year.

Public Rights of Way:

As reported previously the parish council has paused its efforts try to resolve the issue of the footpaths across Debach Airfield. We had believed that we had identified an acceptable way forward, however Suffolk County Council have basically said they will not help as it's such a low priority for them.

Instead, the Parish Council has concentrated its efforts on other matters such as road safety.

Village Infrastructure:

Village Sign

I was hoping to report that the work had all been completed unfortunately, although the new post is in place, we have not been able to fit the sign, we hope to conclude this shortly. Nonetheless we would like to thank:

Mike Green and his team for the excellent refurbishment and repaint of the sign.
Peter Sherman for profiling the Oak Post and
Ron Wood for his assistance in reinstalling the post

Dog Poo Bins

We have purchased another dog poo bin which has now been installed to the Right of the main village hall entrance

Road Safety:

As reported previously Clopton Parish Council produced a detailed report for submission to Suffolk County Council, which we believed made a strong case for a 40-mph speed limit to be introduced along the B1078 from Manor Road towards Drabbs Lane.

As part of this process, and in order to explore what options might be open for us to obtain some traction on this issue, I attended the East Suffolk Council Road Safety Forum meetings. This was an opportunity to meet with Members of East Suffolk Council, other Parish Councils, and to understand their issues with the hope that collectively we could lobby Suffolk County Council and get some of our issues resolved.

I can report that we are not alone in our frustration over traffic speeds through our village.

I also took the opportunity to raise concerns about road safety and the potential traffic increase on the B1078 as a result of the Sizewell C proposals, directly with EDF via a zoom link to one of the EDF Sizewell C Q & A sessions. I did feel that this was met with a positive response.

I have already mentioned our submission, regarding road safety on the B1078, to the Sizewell C planning inspectorate.

I am pleased to say that thanks to the major effort and lobbying on our behalf by our new County Councillor Elaine Bryce, we were able to arrange an on-site meeting with the Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Highways and our local Highways Officer where we were able to show them all the houses reliant on the shop road junction, and demonstrate the difficulty of exiting the junction by vehicle using the traffic mirror. We also walked the B1078 towards manor road to demonstrate the risks taken by pedestrians, particularly anyone with a pushchair and toddler alongside, as well as the visibility issues at the manor

road junction with the B1078 and the risks that a national speed limit along this stretch of road presents.

I do feel that Suffolk County Council Highways finally recognised the dangers that our villagers experience and the unique situation we have in the village, unfortunately we still do not qualify for a reduced speed limit.

They did agree however to look at what significant additional measures could be introduced. Although we have yet to see any proposals and we will be chasing this up.

Village Hall

The Village Hall is owned by the Parish Council and has been Leased to the Village Hall Management Committee for maintenance and day to day running, however it is felt that there would be benefit in having improved liaison with the Parish Council and we are beginning to work together to achieve this.

Finally:

The parish council once again offers heartfelt thanks to Della Hughes who continues to run the Clopton eNews, assists with the village website and manages the village hall bookings, all on a voluntary basis.

I also want to mention and thank the Village Hall management committee and other volunteers who relieve the Parish Council of a great deal of work on the running and upkeep of our village hall.

I would like to thank our County Councillor Elaine Bryce particularly for her stoic support of our bid for a speed limit on the B1078 and her wide-ranging efforts to improve road safety in the ward.

Every Parish Council that I have worked with over the year has commented on how tirelessly Elaine has worked.

I would also like to thank our District Councillor Tony Fryatt, for his long standing and significant support, to the village, as well as for the general advice he has provided to me over the year.

I must not forget my fellow councillors for their efforts over the last year, particularly for organising our forthcoming Jubilee Celebrations in the village which, I have to take this opportunity to plug and promote:

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank all those supporting our village in other capacities. You all do sterling work and contribute greatly to making Clopton the splendid village that it is.

Finally on the recognition front, I have been lucky or unlucky enough to witness the torrent of emails that are constantly circulated to our Parish Clerks. These emails cover a vast range of topics, and buried within the general updates, or information for circulation, are some that are relevant, and or require immediate action. Obviously, they all have to be opened in order to filter the chaff from the seed and this requires a great deal of time. This is on top of the more obvious work of a Parish Clerk not forgetting the major effort required in preparation for the annual audit. So, on behalf of the Parish Council, I would like to convey our heartfelt thanks to our Parish Clerk Kay.

In conclusion, although there are some long standing issues that we are yet to bring to a satisfactory conclusion and Clopton Parish Council finances are not quite as strong as they were, I am confident that Clopton Parish Council is in a good position to take village affairs forward.

I will close by plugging our Jubilee Celebrations:

The events start with Beacon Lighting on 2nd June and the Fete on the 3rd June. Please do come along with friends, family, neighbours, enemies, in fact anyone you can drag as they will be extremely enjoyable events

Peter Raffell
Chairman

19th May 2022