

## WITHERSFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

### CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – MAY 2022

Over the last 12 months the Parish Council has resumed its meetings “in person”, holding them at the village hall and at the EpiCentre. Whilst Skype meant that we could continue the work of the Parish Council through the pandemic, it is good to be able to meet again – although we continue to take precautions.

Over the last year the Parish Council has continued to pursue the most significant issues to our residents – traffic speed and volumes through the village; the impact of planned housing developments across the Parish; superfast broadband roll-out; and the protection of our rural environment.

Our **Traffic Working Group** has continued to work hard and has achieved success in gaining agreement to a 20mph zone through the village. Last autumn the 40mph buffer zones on 4 of the roads into the village were implemented. Although this took more than 3 years to get achieved, it is a small step towards making our village a safer place. Whilst it's true that there remain many motorists who ignore the new speed limits, they are observed by hopefully most motorists and have reduced the average speed for traffic.

Cllr Frank Eve's report gives further details on the working group's work.

The **Neighbourhood Plan** working group, coordinated by Cllr Ian Kinlock has worked with our consultant towards a draft Neighbourhood Plan for Withersfield. The plan is now in draft and almost at the point where we can present in to West Suffolk Planning Department for their views, prior to submitting it to all parish residents in a referendum. The purpose of the plan is to seek to strengthen our defence against unwanted and inappropriate developments in the village and wider parish, and to ensure that Withersfield retains its unique rural characteristics and we ensure that the parish is not swallowed up by an expanding Haverhill.

The Parish Council has given consideration to two particular **planning proposals** during the last year. The first relates to the proposed expansion of the Arboretum estate with a further 140 homes. Permission for the development was granted on appeal and the developers – Taylor Wimpey are currently applying for detailed permission before commencing construction. The developers attended 2 of our meetings and heard concerns from residents and councillors. Whilst there is a general acceptance that this scheme will proceed, there have been concerns raised about the traffic implications and the doubling of the number of homes accessing Cambridge Road from Three CO9unties Way, So far both the developers and the highways authority (Suffolk County Council) seem unmoved and have not come up with any ways of managing the potential congestion and risks.

The second issue has been the continued campaign by a developer to build a 5-house development on the site of Milton House on Thurlow Road. The application has been refused twice now, but undeterred the applicant has appealed the decision. The Parish Council has submitted its objections to the inspector, as have many villagers. We await the outcome with trepidation.

After a break of 2 years because of Covid restrictions, we have restarted the annual village spring clean – Thanks to all who joined us at the beginning of April to help out.

The Parish Council continues to work to be **open and transparent**, this includes regular reports in the Parish Magazine, and more information about how we spend the money that we manage on your behalf. We are now in our fourth year of partnership with the Parish Church in producing the Parish Magazine which is fully funded by advertising and edited by Elaine McInnes-Rich. We also continue to publish formal business and records on the Parish Council website:

[www//withersfield/onesuffolk.net](http://www//withersfield/onesuffolk.net)

Attached to this report is a summary of our income and expenditure over the last year and our draft **budget for the year ahead**. The Parish Council's budget comes from a small proportion of the money that we all pay in Council Tax. Our budget is small, but as Councillors we appreciate that we have a duty to use your money well. We hope that we provide value for money but welcome your comments and suggestions for areas that need our attention.

Thanks go to Cllr Bobby Bennett our **County Councillor**, and Peter Stevens our **District Councillor** for their attendance at our meetings and for their support over the year.

Also, last but by no means least, thanks to Laura Crump our **Parish Clerk** since 2019..

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Terry Rich', is centered on the page. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'T' and 'R'.

Terry Rich Chairman, Withersfield Parish Council 5th May 2022