

## WITHERSFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

### CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – MAY 2019

During 2018/19 your Parish Council has been active dealing with day to day management of parish affairs and progressing important village projects. We have also been fortunate in being able to rely on the support of our County and Borough Councillors to assist us in our work.

During the year we have established a **Traffic management group** who are working on ways in which the volume and speed of traffic travelling through the village can be tackled. It has also turned its attention to the speed of traffic along the A1307 as it passes Three Counties Way and the Arboretum. We have managed to secure agreeing of Suffolk County Council to the introduction of **40mph buffer zones** leading into the Withersfield Village -along Silver Street, Skippers Lane, Withersfield Road from Haverhill to Queens Street and the road into the village from Little Thurlow. The County Council have now got to cost the scheme and there will be formal consultation with anyone they might affect. However, all being well, following passing of new Traffic Orders, the buffer zones should be implemented during the coming year.

The Parish Council has also agreed to commence work on drawing up a **Neighbourhood Plan**. This would cover issues like where and whether further development should take place in the parish and other issues around land and zoning. Whilst Neighbourhood Plans are not legally binding and have to be consistent with other local planning policies, they can add weight to the voice of the Parish Council in commenting on planning applications. With continued pressure for development of additional homes across our region, it is important that we are best placed to be influential and to ensure that we can preserve the quality of our environment. I hope that we will be able to gather more views from parishioners at our annual meeting and subsequently.

Last year the Parish Council were concerned that the owners of the **Haverhill Research Park** had secured permission to develop the site for "light industrial" rather than being restricted to use as hotel and research use. Recently we have heard that plans have changed and further housing is being proposed. Whilst there is clearly some relief that Arboretum residents will not have to face regular flow of HGVs accessing light industrial units, we will keep track of developments here, hoping that this part of our Parish does not become over-developed.

Issues at the **Meldham Flood storage area** (West Town Park) have continued to persist with large numbers of vehicles associated with the fishing club accessing the site. As well as pressing the Environment Agency for improved management of the site, we have secured funding for the installation of some litter bins for the site. This should reduce waste being left near to the gateway causing a nuisance to local residents.

We had our **annual village Spring Clean** in March. A group of around 15 villagers turned out and cleared the usual mountain of debris thoughtlessly throw out of passing cars as they enter and exit our village. The Haverhill Echo again reinforced our message reporting our efforts prominently in the paper. It would be very much appreciated if more people could join in with this effort next year.

The Parish Council supported voluntary efforts to host a **Parish Cricket match** in the summer – this was a great success bringing in many parishioners to play a friendly but well fought match. We hope that the event will be repeated this year.

A further great event was held to mark the **100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War one**. This coincided with the completion of the renovation of the War Memorial. A great indoor street party in the village hall was well attended – thanks to all those who volunteered to organise the event.

The Parish Council continues to work to be more **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 have joined forces with St Mary's Church to secure the continuation of the Parish magazine to all homes,

is available as an electronic edition on the Arboretum Community Facebook page. 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.

This year the Parish Council welcomed Peter Lord, Lucy Guest and Nissa French-Ramstyn as **new co-optees** on the Council. **Parish Council elections** were due to take place on 3<sup>rd</sup> May. In the event these were uncontested with 5 nominations for the 7 councillor seats. So, Frank Eve, Lucy Guest, Ian Kinloch, Peter Lord and Terry Rich were elected. The Parish Council will fill the remaining two vacancies through co-option.

Thanks go to Cllr Mary Evans our **County Councillor**, and Jane Midwood our **Borough Councillor** for their attendance at our meetings and for their support over the year. Jane Midwood has now stood down from her Borough Council seat and we look forward to working with her successor, Cllr Peter Stevens.

Also, last but by no means least, thanks to Jill Johnson who has worked tirelessly as our **Parish Clerk** over the year. Jill stands down from her role as Clerk in June after 5 years in post. She has been a major asset to the work of the Parish Council and I hope that we can persuade Jill, to remain actively involved with parish and parish council affairs.



Terry Rich Chairman, Withersfield Parish Council 6 May 2019