

Ardeley Parish Council – Chairman’s Report 2020-21

Welcome fellow Councillors and Parishioners.

The past year has been an unprecedentedly challenging one both for parishioners and the parish council. Due to the imposition of the national lockdown last March, we were not permitted to hold our 2020 annual meetings, and legislation to enable the holding of public meetings remotely had not yet come into play.

From July onwards we were directed to conduct the council’s business by way of virtual meetings and although I admit that the technological issues have at times been rather trying, it has had the benefit of encouraging more villagers to attend.

We very much hope that this trend will continue now that we are at last returning to normality in the village hall. Obviously, it is still important that we continue to observe protocols in place such as social distancing and being as paperless as possible. As such my colleagues and I will be sanitising the furniture before we leave this evening as requested by the Village Hall Committee.

One of the most positive aspects of the last year has been the overwhelming community spirit and togetherness that ensued once restrictions came into place, the shining example of this being the Volunteer Support Group who were able to help get the donated sanitiser to every household, the penning and printing of many hundreds of fliers, the distribution of which seemed to happen in record time.

We like many communities nationally have been saddened with loss of family, friends and acquaintances both within and outside of the parish. It was a shock to us all to learn of Chris Dawson’s passing. Chris did so much, seen and unseen, for our community, his lifelong passion for maintaining and supporting our parish leaves big shoes to fill although Calvin Hawes is picking up the mantle, for which we are truly grateful.

I would like to offer my special thanks to Mr Rob Jameson and Cllr Andy Miller for their support in maintaining the playing field and churchyard respectively until Calvin took over, and additionally to Lou Neale and Paul Lavers who also helped with an Easter trim.

Because of the pandemic, all plans to mark the 70th Anniversary of VE Day had to be abandoned and the tree planting on Moor Green has had to be put on hold; however, we look forward to moving forward with this in the coming year.

The installation of the new notice boards in Moor Green and Cromer was completed, as well as refurbishment of the existing ones in Ardeley and Wood End. We would like to thank Mr James Williamson for his superb craftsmanship.

The council also decided to make a contribution to the restoration of the church lych gate which forms a central feature of the village and we look forward to the time when works are completed.

We have considered and made comments on a steady number of planning applications, always trying to balance the desire of the applicant to develop and improve their property with the aim of maintaining the character of our beautiful parish, the preservation of the conservation areas and the needs of wildlife, albeit the parish council's role in the ultimate decision is only advisory and the views we express, whilst always noted, are not always implemented.

We have had the usual discussions with the Highways Department about the state of disrepair to some of the lanes, in particular Blind Lane, which seems to have been satisfactorily remedied, as we know this is an ongoing process. I would at this point like to thank our District and County Cllr Ken Crofton for his efforts in persuading the higher local authorities to take action.

The usual hedge cutting and maintenance has been carried out after the breeding and flowering seasons have finished in accordance with ministerial guidelines. In addition, the lower branches of the oak trees on Moor Green were cut back to allow for greater visibility both for pedestrians and traffic.

Last year, the council's independent auditor, Mr Alan Herbert, tendered his resignation from a role that he has filled voluntarily and tirelessly for decades, I'm not quite sure how many! We wish him a very happy and peaceful retirement, although we hope that he will continue to take an interest in parish affairs, if not the finances.

I am most grateful for the input and support of my vice chairman and fellow councillors, all of whom are volunteers and without whose positive input the council would cease to move any issue forward.

However, behind every meeting and every decision, quietly beavering away is Lorna our superb parish clerk. She is a pleasure to work with and particularly good at keeping us on the correct track.

It has been my great privilege to be able to serve the community in which I was born and brought up in and as Chairman for the last 2 years. I thank my fellow councillors for their faith in me and trust I have lived up to expectations.

Thank you and best wishes to one and all.

Adrian Waygood