

Parish Council Report for the Annual Parish Meeting 2024

Since the last Annual Parish Meeting there have been a number of changes within the Parish Council, we have lost, after a number of years service to the council, the services of Carol Garrett, who has decided to step back from the role as a councillor, Carol was chair of the PC from 2012 to 2016 and more recently as vice chair, we have lost a considerable wealth of knowledge and experience, but can fully understand her reasoning retire gracefully, many thanks to Carol for her service to the council, Carol will however still be taking an active role in other areas in the village.

As stated earlier we in the past year have seen changes, we lost the services of our former Chairman Brian Smallcombe in November 2022, who had to bow out gracefully on grounds of ill health, we accordingly found ourselves with a reduced number of councillors, during the past year we however have been fortunate to have two volunteers step up and offer their services, and they were co-opted onto the council so we now have a full complement of officers.

The new councillors are Rupert Precious who lives in Willow Tree Yard and Roland Bright who lives in Shop Street, both have been taking an active role in the council as they find their way around what we are, and what we try to deliver on behalf of the Community at large.

Matthew Hicks remains as our District Councillor at Suffolk CC and who continues to support the parish with his normal zest and zeal, again we must record our appreciation to Matthew for his services to us, and long may it continue.

Unfortunately during the past 12 months we have to report the passing of our earlier chairmen, Brian Smallcombe (2016 to 2022) Brian , and his extended family gave a lot of their time and effort to the village and his and their efforts on our behalf should not go without our sincere thanks.

On a brighter note since the last APM we have celebrated the Coronation of King Charles the Third on the 6th May 2023 the first such celebration in the majority of parishioners memories, again we must record our appreciation to all those who worked tirelessly to organise the festivities on the day at the Community Centre.

The council and councillors have been busy over the last year endeavouring to work to the benefit of the community,

- the first stages of the “Worlingworth Goes Green” initiative have after a lot of work and time culminating in the installation of planters and plants at various locations, hopefully this initiative is the first stage of an ongoing process to (a) brighten up the village and (b) deter unauthorised parking on our village greens and open spaces .
- Support was given to Worlingworth Primary School in funding part of the early years play area providing a safer and better area for the younger members of our community to develop , this area will also help with space at the school during the summer months as classes could be undertaken outside.
- Support was also given to maintain the village magazine and newsletter both in financial terms , but also in formulating an agreed development to ensure financial stability going forward along with representatives of other parishes who are recipients , Tannington Southolt, Bedfield etc, the magazine now finds its self in a healthy position for the future, thanks must be expressed to Chris Watson for taking on the role of chairman for the meetings and the formulation of the plan forward.

- A new notice board was erected to replace the old, and “time served” board in Shop Street, we now have a new and weather proof unit
- On a more mundane note the council also replaced a number of “doggy do-do” bins where they had become damaged, or time worn, along with a new bin on New Road, we now have 9 bins at various locations throughout the village so there is no excuse for allowing animals to foul on the footpaths, bridleways etc, we pay council Suffolk CC to empty these on a regular basis, so please use them, there is no excuse.
- Ongoing support of the Community Bus was maintained over the last year , this providing an additional resource to parishioners with a regular programme of trips to nearby towns etc.
- Offers were made to St Marys Church in order to upgrade the footpath within the church grounds, this was a dual purpose offer, (a) to make it safer for those visiting graves within the church grounds and (b) to facilitate safe passage for pedestrians coming and going from the Worlingworth Hall end of the village rather than walking on the carriageway at an areas where the road narrows considerably.
- Copies of the “Worlingworth Wayfinder “map were reproduced these are available to all within the village, or those visiting, they are also distributed along with the “welcome pack” to all new residents.
- The platinum Jubilee bench was eventually installed within the grounds of the community centre, somewhat delayed, but better late than never.
- Contact was made from Worlingworth Local History group who proposed sending the Worlingworth Fire Engine to the BBC Repair Shop. Whilst the engine is stored within St Marys Church it is the property of the parish , the council were therefore delighted when contact was made from the BBC and the engine was transported to Sussex for repair, the works were undertaken and the fire engine returned , please watch out for the new series of The repair Shop, Worlingworth on the national map , thanks must go the Geoff Robinson for all the organisation associated with the application transport etc, we potentially will see our Geoff on the box.
- We have maintained our support for a number of other events within the village including the footpath walking day to ensure all our network of paths are open, safe and accessible, any health and safety issues were reported to the Footpaths Officer at Suffolk CC for action, we await their plans / p[proposals

We must now address “The Elephant in the Room”, the repeated flooding occurring at various locations in the village, Mill Road, Newtown, Shop Street, Church Road etc, whilst earlier in 2023 a number of properties were impacted by flooding this was eclipsed by the impact of Storm Babet on the 20th and 21st October, in total 22 properties were impacted by the flood water, this was not just storm water but a mixture of both surface and foul water as both networks were overcome by the sheer volume of water, 72mm of rain were recorded in a 24 hour period, some properties were flooded out a second time in the year, and a number of residents as of today still remain in “temporary” accommodation some some 24 weeks later, with projected timescales for return in some cases looking into June or July,

As a result of Storm Babet Worlingworth had the dubious honour of being the fourth worst area impacted in Suffolk, behind Framlingham and Debenham,

Storm Babet however brought out the true spirit of the village with parishioners opening their houses to those impacted/ flooded out for overnight accommodation and ongoing support, until insurance companies could be contacted and arrangements made, Local farmers mobilised tractors etc to ferry people about and get them to places of safety, thank you to all unsung volunteers who stepped forward on the day to help others , and who as quickly as they arrived on the day returned to the “day jobs” when the worst was over, these are the unsung

heroes of the day, thank you to all those who did such without thought for themselves and quietly disappeared. You got people home, you got people to safety, for those directly impacted there are not words to express the gratitude for your selfless behaviour.

Subsequent to Storm Babet the Parish Council convened a public meeting at the Community Centre, where representatives of Suffolk CC, Suffolk Floods Authority, Anglian Water etc were represented and chaired by Matthew Hicks, to discuss the issue of why, what, where and when was going to be done to mitigate the potential of a reoccurrence of such an incident, Suffolk CC have instigated a Statutory "section 19" investigation this should report back as to what can be done and by whom, whilst this was a one in a hundred year occurrence, with global warming and the threats that that presents, we need to ensure that we all do what we can now to mitigate any such event in the future,

On a more mundane front the Parish Council has been a consultee on eleven planning applications within the parish boundary, whilst we can only make comment on such applications, we have endeavoured to represent the feelings of the community, currently the only "outstanding" application is an item awaiting approval of "reserved matters" for the proposed development of 27 new houses on Shop Street for Flagship Housing, a holding objection has been made by Suffolk Floods Authority and supported by the Parish Council in regard to the disposal of both Foul and surface water from the site, we await the revised proposals from Flagship Housing.

Again whilst not a member of the Parish Council, Carolyn Barnes has continued to record the findings from the speed camera located within the village, these are forwarded to Suffolk Police for potential action, whilst the council has funded, along with help from Matthew Hicks as part of his "Localities Budget" new signs, road markings, and additional signage, we still have a number of motorists who insist on driving through the village at speeds that must be considered as dangerous in view of the narrowness of the roads, this is exacerbated by the shorter hours of daylight in the autumn / winter period, we will as a council still press on with our efforts to reduce the element of speed through the village.

In September of 2023 the Pub and Shop in Shop Street was impacted by a fire within the shop that impacted on the pub area, whilst the shop had only been open a short time it was believed that this provided a great resource for all within the village, due to the fact that these are listed properties the route to repair and reopening has proved somewhat protracted, lets hope for the sake of all this can be resolved as soon as possible,

Francis Maldoon has continued as the Tree Warden for the village, again whilst not a councillor (we did try to get him to join) he continues in this role in sourcing and distributing trees and hedges to those who wish to add to the beauty of the village, if you would like a tree, or just advice please contact Francis, we are sure he will help/ advise wherever possible.

The Council is continuing with a number of other schemes for the benefit of all, if you believe that something requires attention, or our help please contact any of the councillors who are listed on each of the 3 notice boards within the village, please exercise this right, we are there to serve you, if you would prefer please come along to the monthly Parish council Meetings held on the third Wednesday of the month at the Community centre at 7:30 pm, there is a public forum at which point you can raise any issue.

Thank you on behalf of all the council for your thoughts and actions.