

Annual Report of the Parish Council May 2015

Since the last Annual Parish Meeting the Parish Council has undertaken a variety of work on behalf of parishioners. Some of this has been rewarding and some frustrating but we continue to do what we can within our remit.

The impact of budget reductions on Local Authority spending continued to make a significant difference to the speed with which work was carried out.

Reports from Councillor Terry Clements and Suffolk Police have been received at these meetings and our thanks go to them for the work they do for us.

The main areas of this year's work are highlighted under the headings below.

Planning

There have been no individual planning applications over the last year but the development along the Sicklesmere Road over the next few years will have a major impact on the parish.

The development by Hopkins Homes and Pigeon includes 1250 homes, a Primary School, retail park and community facilities. Major road improvements along Rushbrooke Lane and improvements to sewage and drainage facilities are to be carried out. Meetings regarding this have already taken place and will continue.

The main issue of concern for over two years was the **Farm Shop at Low Green**.

This has now closed and the appearance of the site is much improved following its clearance.

Highways

Potholes continue to be a problem and requests for repair are taking much longer to be met. Most of the repairs have been of a temporary nature but some more substantial work is scheduled for 2015 especially in Fox and Pin Lane. This is an area where cuts in spending are definitely showing.

The break up of road edges caused by lorries is a further problem with plans to resurface several of these but with no set time table.

A representative from Highways and an Inspector visited the village in May this year to assess the work needed.

The Local Authority continued to refill the grit bins during the winter.

The **flooding** on the corner near the village hall was a real problem and took some time to resolve. The ditch has been cleared and a pipe unblocked and the work appears to have been effective.

Parish Emergency Plan

This was reviewed during the year, **updated** and distributed in May. Thanks to all those involved in compiling this and to those who volunteer their skills, expertise and time.

Councillor Training

A number of councillors have attended training throughout the year organised by the Suffolk Association of Local Councils and St Edmundsbury. The sessions covered a range of issues relating to parish council work and rural communities including Planning and Budget proposals and New Councillor training.

These meetings are of value in keeping us up to date with legislation and in providing information about funding sources, ideas, etc.

Involvement with the Local Community

a) The Parish Council continues to contribute £100 towards the cost of printing the **Benefice Newsletter** and in providing information about Parish Council work. It continues to be our main means of communication with everyone in the parish.

The Council again contributed £100 towards the **upkeep of the churchyard**.

b) Money received from the Borough Council for the **recycling** bins has been passed from the Parish Council to the village hall committee.

c) The **grass around the village sign and the village hall car park** continues to be cut regularly. The **bus shelter** is swept of leaves and litter and **drainage channels** to allow water to run off from the road are cleared when needed. Several parishioners pick up **litter** when they are out and about. Extra bark is laid on the permissive footpath.

Nowton Park Rangers and Volunteers have given some time to the parish this year. This has included providing bark chippings for the permissive footpath, litter picking, trimming back overhanging trees, clearing the footpath from the village hall to the bus shelter, clearing ditches and removing dead trees.

There are many such small instances of individual initiative which help keep the parish so attractive.

d) **A number of electors have contacted Councillors** over the year and we hope this will continue. The Council needs to know the concerns of electors and suggestions for improvements will always be considered.

Requests this year have resulted in the repair of potholes in specific places, the trimming of overhanging trees and the removal of fly tipping in several places.

One parishioner raised the question of how long we will have to wait for Superfast Broadband. Councillor Clements took this up on the parishioner's behalf and forwarded up to date information. Briefly-it will not be for some time!

Fly tipping continues to be a problem but St Edmundsbury are very prompt in responding to requests for its removal.

f) Councillor Forrow and Mrs Jan Oldfield, the parish **footpath wardens**, continue to walk the parish footpaths on a regular basis to ensure they are kept in a good state of repair and that problems are reported promptly to the Rights of Way Officer. Our thanks to them for undertaking this work.

Neighbourhood Watch

Councillor Michael May continues to co-ordinate this important work and Councillor Renee Forrow has responsibility for Low Green. Both have attended **Neighbourhood Watch meetings** and taken the opportunity to raise concerns with the police.

A number of incidents reported to the police have been investigated and it is pleasing to know that crime in Nowton is very low. Our designated community police officer changes quite frequently and this makes it more difficult to build up a relationship with someone who has some local knowledge.

Elections May 2015

All members of the existing parish council were willing to stand and as the election was uncontested membership of the Council remains the same.

The Clerk, Mrs Pauline Stoddart, continues to provide excellent service to the Parish and can be contacted via the Chairman.

Finally---

Thanks to:- all Councillors who have served this year and worked towards improving some aspects of the lives of the parishioners of Nowton. We have been fortunate this year to be able to co-opt and now confirm the appointment of Dr Jonathan Masters as a Councillor. This restores the Council to its full complement of 5.

:- the Clerk and Finance Officer, Mrs Pauline Stoddart, for her continued hard work, efficiency and support.

:- the internal auditor, Mr Doug Heaton.

Carol

Perry

(Chairman, Nowton Parish

Council

May 2015)