

## **Annual Report of the Parish Council May 2016**

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.

We were sorry to lose the services of Jonathan Masters who moved house during the year and was unable to continue as a councillor. In the short time he worked with us he was an effective and constructive colleague.

We were fortunate to co-opt Jon Green as a replacement. Jon moved into the village last July and has already shown his valuable management and administrative skills. As someone new to the parish he brings a fresh perspective to the council.

**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 council 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 several minor individual planning applications over the last year with no objections being raised to any of them.

The development by Hopkins Homes and Pigeon along the Sicklesmere Road including 1250 homes, a Primary School, retail park, community facilities, major road improvements along Rushbrooke Lane and improvements to sewage and drainage facilities will result in a change in the parish boundary. These involve the loss of 3 houses and all the land on the Rushbrooke side of the A134 which would have added 500 homes to Nowton Parish. These changes will be subject to public consultation.

The main issue of concern over the last year has been the application for a 60 bed Nursing Home in the grounds of Nowton Court. After failing to gain approval for a similar application 3 years ago some changes were made to the original plans. The response from many members of the public, the parish council and the Local Authority led the elected members to reject the new application on the grounds that it

was too big, would dominate the present building of Nowton Court and would be visible from the footpath in Nowton Park. It is very likely that there will be an appeal against this decision.

## **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 the substantial work promised, especially in Fox and Pin Lane, has been further delayed as roads in a village like Nowton are not considered a priority. Suffolk County Council, despite extra money from central government, is 10 million pounds short of what is needed for repairs. 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.

The Local Authority continued to refill the grit bins during the winter though fortunately they were hardly needed.

## **Parish Emergency Plan**

This was reviewed during the year, **updated** and distributed in May 2014. Thanks to all those involved in compiling this and to those who volunteer their skills, expertise and time. This is to be updated every 2 years and so a new edition will appear later in 2016.

## **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 regarding policing, the fire service, highways, etc. These meetings are of value in keeping us up to date with legislation, in providing information about funding sources and the direction of future policy.

## **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 parish council now has a website on which are published meeting dates, agendas and minutes as well as contact details and financial information. This follows new legislation regarding transparency for all small authorities. The website can be accessed through [onesuffolk.gov.uk](http://onesuffolk.gov.uk) and clicking on parish councils.

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 valuable 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 parishioners 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.

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

e) 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 Farrow 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. Changes to police organisation mean that from 2015 there are fewer officers and most information comes via e-mail. Police officers are no longer attending council meetings unless a specific request is made. It is regrettable that this face to face contact is being reduced.

## **Finally---**

**Thanks to:-** all Councillors who have served this year and worked towards improving some aspects of the lives of the parishioners of Nowton.

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

:- the internal auditor, Mr Douglas Heaton.

Carol Perry

(Chairman, Nowton Parish Council)

May 2016