

## **Chairman's Report April 2021**

The last year has been dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic and the various restrictions associated with it. It is good that as we move towards the summer there appears to be light at the end of the tunnel, primarily driven by the success the vaccination program building on the sacrifices people have made during the year. Our parish has been impacted by the pandemic, just like most other places, but it has also seen acts of support and good neighbour behaviour that has helped people through it. Thank you to everyone for working together to help get through the pandemic so far.

We have continued business as usual as a Parish Council, albeit with meetings held over Zoom rather than in person, and the main highlights of the year are as follows:

### **Highways**

We continue to work closely with the County Council Highways department to resolve problems within the parish and also to ensure we get our fair share of general maintenance. This year we have seen:

- new surface dressing done on a number of roads – plus new white lines
- issues dealt with in terms of signage, bollards, ditches
- ongoing work on potholes of which there are many across and within the Parish

In addition we have been part of the consultation process on the major highways developments around dualling the A47 and completing the Northern Distributor Road. Both these major developments may impact our local road systems.

### **Planning**

We continue to review all planning applications in our parish that are relevant. During 2020 we had 10 formal applications of which 8 were approved by South Norfolk and 2 were rejected.

Of the 8 approvals we supported or were neutral on 6 of them. On the other 2 we raised objections which were answered and effectively removed prior to the application being approved.

On the 2 that were rejected, we raised objections that South Norfolk agreed with.

### **Flooding**

Our Parish, like many areas of Norfolk, was hit by major flooding over the winter. Norfolk County Council are the lead flood management agency in Norfolk. They are still dealing with the results of some of the flooding and discussions have begun re preventative work. The Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance has been set up, chaired by Sir Richard Dannatt, and bringing together over 30 different agencies that are involved with water.

### **PROW's**

We have taken a more focused approach on ensuring our Public Right of Ways are maintained in good condition. These are frequently used in the parish and have been more so during the pandemic lockdowns. All the PROW's are reviewed on a regular basis and any issues raised with Norfolk County Council who have responsibility for them. Thanks go to Jane Brown who has raised the profile of this issue within the parish.

### **Phone Box in Runhall**

A group of local residents have renovated the phone box in Runhall. The aim of the box is now to be a kind of swap shop – no money – if you have something that is in good condition and can fit on one of the shelves, pop it in and somebody else can make use of it. There is also space outside for surplus plants and produce.

In addition, Jane Brown, with the help of Mary and Terry Miller's research, has put up some interesting information on Runhall's history. The Parish Council would like to thank all those involved in this project.

### **Budgets**

The council has run a balanced budget over the past year and as such has been able to keep the Parish Council precept at the same level as last year. This will be the second year in a row that we have been able to keep the precept at the same level.

### **Police Updates**

We get a regular update from the police as to what is happening within the Wymondham neighbourhood of which our parish is part. The neighbourhood has a low level of crime and disorder, and the Neighbourhood Policing Team and its partner agencies are continuing to work hard to drive these down even further. The main priorities for the local police in our neighbourhood are Drug related issues, Nuisance vehicles and anti-social behaviour.

We also get regular reports on rural crime across Norfolk under Operation Randall, again which is still relatively low. Some of the key issues here are hare coursing, dog thefts and plant thefts (snowbells and bluebells).

Up to date details of police activity can be found on the Norfolk Constabulary website.

### **Future Activity**

Looking forward to the next 12 months the council will aim to keep on top of business as usual whilst supporting parishioners in any extra activity.

There is currently work progressing to see if a defibrillator can be installed in the refurbished phone box in Runhall. Some funds to help support the project have been provided by South Norfolk but further fund raising is required. Welborne Village Hall are also looking to install a defibrillator and this is currently proceeding through the planning process.

A number of new ideas have been floated for additional activity which we will discuss separately:

1. Hosting an information hub periodically.
2. Installing a hard core school bus stop.
3. Developing a footpath between Welborne and Barnham Broom.

Finally I would like to give thanks to some people. In particular I would like to thank our parish clerk, Bev Long, who has continued to provide excellent support to the council despite the additional challenges the pandemic has caused.

I would also like to thank my fellow councillors for the time they give up and the support they provide across all the issues we deal with. In addition I would like to thank our local councillors Margaret Dewsbury (Norfolk County Council) and Richard Elliot (South Norfolk District) who have continued to provide guidance and support and have also managed to attend most of our Zoom meetings.

I would also like to thank all the different groups who operate within the parish and all parishioners for enabling our parish to thrive, even in these difficult times.

Simon Guest

Chair Brandon Parva, Coston, Runhall and Welborne Parish Council