

Chairman's Report April 2022

As with 2020-2021 the last year has been dominated by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. However during the year the situation has improved significantly such that all legal restrictions have now been removed and life is returning to a degree of normality, albeit everyone is still urged to practice safe and responsible behaviours. Our parish has been impacted by the pandemic, just like most other places, and it has 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, initially with meetings over Zoom but back to in person meetings since July and the main highlights of the year are as follows:

Highways

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

- issues dealt with in terms of signage and ditches
- ongoing work on potholes of which there are many across the Parish

However the progress on resolving issues with ditches has been disappointingly slow, particularly the work around the area flooded at the end of 2020, near the junction of Hall Road, Common Road and Pound Lane.

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.

Planning

We continue to review all planning applications in our parish that are relevant. During 2021 we had 5 formal applications all of which were approved by South Norfolk.

The Parish Council was supportive or neutral on all the applications.

Flooding

Our Parish, like many areas of Norfolk, was hit by major flooding over the winter of 2020. The Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance has been set up bringing together over 30 different agencies that are involved with water and they are progressing a programme of activity working through a priority sequence, which has not yet reached our parish.

PROW's

All the PROW's are reviewed on a regular basis by our three PROW wardens and any issues raised with Norfolk County Council who have responsibility for them. The PROW's have remained generally in good condition throughout the year, with only occasional issues caused by heavy rainfall. However there are still issues caused by dog fouling and general litter that adversely impact them.

Litter

Three of our four villages currently have volunteer Litter Wardens in place (there is a vacancy in Brandon Parva). They work throughout the year removing litter from the local area and thus improving the environment. Whilst the council is very grateful for the job they do, it is important that everyone in the parish takes care of the parish to ensure it remains a pleasant living space.

Parish Amenities

The main facilities in the Parish are Welborne Village Hall, Runhall allotments, Runhall Play Area and the Exchange (in the Old Phone Box in Runhall). These continue to be well used and the details are covered in their own separate reports.

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. The main priorities for the local police in our neighbourhood are Road Safety, Anti-Social Behaviour and concerns around drug dealing and use.

We also get regular reports on rural crime across Norfolk under Operation Randall, again which is still relatively low. 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 are currently two village events organised to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. There is a Jubilee Celebration at Runhall Recreation Ground (Saturday 28th May from 3.00pm to 6.00pm) and a Tea Party at Welborne Church and Village Hall (Thursday 2nd June from 3.00pm to 6.00pm).

The Runhall Community Group are conducting research across the whole parish on the community facilities in Runhall. Details of their survey were distributed with the last parish newsletter and the more people who reply the better.

Some initial work has been undertaken by Mike Webb on the Parish Council looking at creating a new footpath from wellbore to Barnham Broom. This project is currently struggling to get the right level of support from the Barnham Broom council to make progress.

The council is participating with other local councils and some of the regions MP's, in an exercise being led by George Freeman MP (our local MP) looking at an area called "Norfolk Research Triangle" – located between Norwich, Dereham and Wymondham/Attleborough – which in future years will see further development driven by the growth of the world class Norwich Research Park. This is a long term project with the aim of ensuring that future growth and development in this area is done in a way that benefits local communities and does not adversely impact this corner of Norfolk through poor planning or increased rat-running for example.

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 throughout the year.

I would also like to thank all the different groups who operate within the parish and all parishioners for enabling our parish to thrive.

Simon Guest

Chair Brandon Parva, Coston, Runhall and Welborne Parish Council