

SOUTH CREAKE PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL GENERAL REPORT 2019/2021

The last year and a half has been challenging - and owing to circumstances beyond our control this report covers two years. Closures and lockdowns caused by the pandemic meant that new methods of meeting had to be devised. Very quickly the PC started to use ZOOM but continued, when appropriate and within legal guidelines, to meet parishioners. None of this would have been possible without the input and well informed guidance of Sarah Harvey - and of course the commitment of councillors: Pete Abbey, Tim Allen, Richard Chantree, Paul Collins, Lorna Goodall, Bob Rosen and Ben Sexton. They all freely gave their time and local knowledge to serve and represent our community and thanks go the whole team for everything they have done over the last two years.

REPORT

During 2019/2020/2021 the Parish Council continued to monitor those areas for which it was responsible, work to improve facilities whenever possible and ensure that Parish funds were used to best effect.

Allotments

Clearing of rubbish on the Leicester Road site continued, an access gateway repaired and foot paths regularly cut.

The Back Street site is now fully tenanted and all anomalies resolved. In addition, to ensure that tenancies are always used appropriately, amendments were made to numbers 5 and 17 of the allotment rules.

Finance

Parish finances, which were available for parishioners to scrutinise, were carefully recorded and regularly evaluated by Sarah Harvey. As a result the internal audit for the years 2019/20 and 2020/21 were successful.

Figures for 2019/20 are already publicly available, therefore this report only covers the figures for 2020/21. They are as follows:

Expenditure for 2020/21 was £15,478.29

Income, including the precept set at £15,248 in January 2020 and the Council Tax Support Grant of £88.00, was £19,330.31.

The annual accounts will be made available on the village website, once these have been approved by the Council at the Annual Parish Council Meeting.

This January the precept was set at £16,508.00 and this, along with the Council tax Support Grant of £97.00, was received in April for the financial year 2021/22

Apart from ongoing costs which included grounds maintenance, insurance and dog waste removal the Parish Council continued to support local charities and donations were made to BMA CCS (£100) and East Anglia's Children's Hospices (£50).

Flood and infrastructure

This winter's exceptionally high rainfall and consequent flooding caused serious problems in the centre of the village - in particular the ingress of ground water into the sewerage system. Many parishioners were unable to use sanitary equipment and sewage leaked into roads and gardens. Representations were made to AWA, Highways, the Environment Agency and the Environmental Health department at the

Borough Council. To date 'brown water' is no longer being pumped into the River Burn but continues to be tankered away. Whilst AWA have said that they will investigate and repair their infrastructure the PC awaits notification of when this will be done. The PC indicated that when this happens these measures must be sustainable and not, as in the past, 'patch-ups'.

Highways

There have been many difficult issues relating to Highways. The PC has no power other than reporting problems and Highways are constrained by limited finances and strict rules. However, it is pleasing to report that after many years and repeated requests to reduce speed limits on the B1355 there may be some movement regarding the resolution of anomalies at the northern end of the village. Highways have also committed, via a survey, to ascertain if the speed limit between South Creak and North Creak should be reduced to 50mph or even less. (Evidence has shown that drivers who are speeding tend to reduce their speed to approx 10mph over the limit. Therefore where the limit is 50mph a speeding driver is likely to reduce from 70 to 60). Other speed reduction measures included the purchase, with the help of a grant secured through the Norfolk County Council's Parish Partnership Scheme, standard gateways positioned on the approach to the village from Bloodgate Hill. It is hoped that, along with other initiatives, all vehicle owners will be encouraged to drive more slowly and with greater consideration.

Open Spaces

Until this winter's floods the Village Green and Playing Field were well used and effectively maintained by a contractor appointed in 2018. Despite extensive flood damage to grassed areas it is expected that given time they will regenerate. The PC continued to monitor trees and assets on the Green and Playing Field and a new dog waste bin was installed. Thanks go to those villagers who kept a neighbourly eye on the two areas, cleared litter and helped ensure that play equipment was kept in good order.

Ostrich Inn

For several years the future of the village pub was of great concern and in collaboration with the Community Events Committee the Parish Council submitted an application to have the building legally listed as an Asset of Community Value. This was granted. It is pleasing to note that since the last report the pub was sold as a Free House, and has been completely refurbished - and in coming weeks is due to open as the Ostrich Inn.

Planning

There were several planning applications. All were reviewed and recommendations made by the PC were unanimous.

Play Area

With partial help from the Jacks Lane Community Benefit Fund adult outdoor gym equipment was purchased and proved popular along with that in the children's play area. Unfortunately, because of Covid restrictions and flooding, access to the play area has been restricted. It is hoped that with time coupled with some repairs the site can be reopened as soon as is safely possible. Thanks go to those councillors who have helped with the maintenance of equipment and emptying of the waste bin.

River Burn

The PC were approached by the Norfolk Rivers Trust with a view to constructing a 'Refugia' alongside the River Burn - a rarity as it is one of only 200 chalk streams in the world. Due to the floods this project, to form a large pond positioned on an allotment field thus providing refuge for wild life during times of drought, has been postponed. It is planned to go ahead at the end of this year. In addition efforts have been made to improve the health of the Burn especially along the edge of the Village Green and Playing Filed. Good practice regarding the feeding of fowl has been promoted and an information board outlining the wild life that should be seen is planned.

Website

Thanks to Sarah Harvey the PC, in conjunction with the 'Village', has a new web site. It is still evolving and will with time feature further links and news submitted by parishioners. The address for the site is:

www.southcreakepc.info.

Whilst the address has been indexed with Google and the old website removed it may take some time for the new site to 'bed in'. However a search using the link mentioned is effective.

And finally.....

My personal thanks go to all the councillors and Sarah Harvey for their patience and input over the last two years. I have enjoyed my tenure as Chair and as I hand over to a new Chair I feel sure that they will receive the same good natured support that I have experienced.

Sara Freakley

May 2021