

Chairman's Annual Report.  
April 2009

Opening.

1. Welcome to the 2009 Annual Meeting for the Cottenham Parish as explained in previous years this is a forum for the Council to summarise its activities and give Parishioners the opportunity to pose questions – it is not a business meeting of the Council.
2. Having delivered the report I shall take questions, allowing approximately 2 minutes for presentation and then subsequently the right to offer a short reply.

Introduction.

1. By way of introduction we have here this evening your Clerk, Julie Groves, and we welcome for the first time our newly appointed Assistant Clerk, Fiona Gooch.

Council now has a full compliment of members and they are:

myself, Rick Bristow, current Chairman.

David Mudd – Vice Chairman; Councillors: Matt Bradney (also a Cabinet Member of County Council); Rob Clarke; Rex Collinson; Kate Heydon; Adrian Ient; Ken Kelso; Paula Johnson; Alan Leeks; Tony Nicholas; David Norman; Chris Simms; David Warham; Tim Wotherspoon (also a District Councillor

and Chairman of the Northstowe Joint Planning Committee) and our guests this evening:

Simon Edwards (District Councillor and Deputy Leader of SCDC); Nigel Bolitho (District Councillor) and David Jenkins (County Councillor and Leader of the Liberal Democrats).

2. One notable absentee from last year is Pat Fox who stood down after giving several years of invaluable service to this community; our thanks again to Pat ... and it would be remiss not to mention the passing last summer of former councillor Hugh Gautrey who is to have a seat placed at the Green in his memory.

Procedure, and as explained in previous years:

1. The Council meets three times a month, once for the Parish Meeting and on two other occasions to discuss planning issues. In addition “working groups” meet periodically to review matters regarding traffic; minerals & waste; and the recreation ground, but only the formal meetings, including this Annual Meeting and the AGM require minutes and a publicised agenda three working days prior to the meeting date. At all such meetings the Council must be quorate thus requiring that 5 councillors attend and able to vote.
2. As with all formal meetings I shall be looking to close this meeting by no later than 10 pm.

Our thanks to Cllr David Mudd who has continued to provide a synopsis of Council activities for the Parish Newsletter and so once again I shall only make comment on the next fiscal period and acknowledge some key issues of the last twelve months.

**Finance: the Parish Precept and the 2009 Budget.**

Having increased the precept for the year 2008/2009 from £124,500 to £148,000, Council decided that given the uncertainty of the economy, and the seemingly never ending intention of all other tax authorities to further burden the average household, the precept would remain unchanged at £148,000

Full details will be available on the CPC web-site but in brief the expenditure is as under:

	<b>2008/9</b>	<b>2009/10</b>	<b>+ / (-)</b>
Category 1	58,316	59,116	800
Category 2	28,050	31,500	3,450
Category 3	2,500	4,500	2,000
Category 4	45,000	71,000	26,000
Category 5	10,830	8,500	(2,330)
Category 6	25,000	17,304	(7,696)
Total	169,696	191,920	22,224

The additional spend of £22,000 is financed by anticipated additional income from the hire of the village hall and a cash surplus from last year.

1. Parish Council Finance & Administration.

The small increase is basically office running costs.

2. Village maintenance & Projects.

An increase of £3,450 – there are pluses/minus on other items but the new budget item is for a bus-shelter at a cost of £3,500 on the Histon Road.

3. Events.

£2000 is allowed for the Fen Edge Festival this year.

4. Recreation Ground.

An increase of £26,000 and a result of: a £20,000 provision for a new road to the proposed new sports pavilion; £12,000 for administration of the Village Hall; £4,000 additional repairs; £3,000 water & sewerage; and £1,000 grounds-man fees. These costs are offset by £14,000 saved from ‘non-repeat’ items of seeding, water installation, and a wayleave cost payable to the Cottenham Charities.

## 5. Donations & s 137 expenditure.

A small saving but broadly cost neutral.

## 6. Contingency.

Used this year as a balancing figure and showing a saving of almost £8,000. However, the £17,000 allowed will be used prudently for the village and will include:

- continued support for the Cottenham Youth Club initiative
- legal costs which may result from a 'defence' of the village over such as Northstowe or other planning projects
- any worthwhile, village benefiting, cause presented during the year.

## **Events of 2008/09.**

1. Brenda Gautrey Way: the money (about £15,000) for maintaining grass (not ditches) on this 'public open space has been received.
2. Tenison Manor: the developers, Persimmon, have gone to ground. All attempts to seek discussion over the transfer of the balancing pond, the green open space, and the ditch have been frustrated.

3. A new lease with the Ladybirds Trust should be signed within the next few weeks offering the pre-school uninterrupted tenure for a new 25 year period
4. Agreement was reached with the Cottenham United Sports & Social Club whereby the Council takes over the running of the building. The building will be renamed the Cottenham Village Hall and in time the building will be refurbished to, hopefully, give it more village appeal
5. Courtesy of a CCC grant the Fen Reeve Woodland has been given a face lift and the hope is that many more villagers will now take advantage of this amenity
6. Lambs Lane is to be resurfaced and yellow lines throughout the village repainted ... hopefully commencing July of this year. Council is particularly grateful to Cllr Bradney without whom these projects would likely have been delayed for quite some time.
7. A new supply of water from the Rampton Rd has been provided to the recreation ground.
8. Two new bus shelters were replaced on the High Street and not without some controversy.

9. A comprehensive response was offered to the consultation on the CCC's Minerals & Waste Plan

10. The Parish experienced mixed fortunes with the Planning Inspectorate in that the latter concurred with its objections to unlawful Traveller pitches on Orchard Close/Water Lane, but rejected its support for residents against operational activities at Chemex. The decision in favour of Chemex was given with conditions and as similar conditions have been placed on a number of consents granted by SCDC, when PC expressed opposition, the council has decided that such conditions need to be monitored very closely and the Clerk has been charged with keeping Council alerted as these somewhat controversial developments commence.

In addition to the above the Council did:

- continue its representation at as many Northstowe consultations as was possible but with the development now stalled it is likely that we shall have to relive the whole process in our attempts to ensure that concerns over traffic & flood risk are never overlooked or ignored
- oppose Mereham and that project is, for now at least, shelved
- continue membership of 'JAG' (the Joint-Action-Group of local villages, of which we are a founder member) and I shall revert on this later

- meet with the developers of the A14 in order that we might become a party to any traffic routing agreements required for either or both HGV's and general traffic ... regrettably we cannot be certain of a positive outcome despite the apparent assurances given.
- discuss with County: *proposed traffic calming measures for the village*, and this is ongoing. It's a slow torturous process constrained by cash but we are still working at it.
- *continue working with County Highways on the up-grading of our pavements* and some improvements have been made and the subject is, again, on-going.
- seek to: *identify suitable land, and vendors, to support projects for affordable homes*. Council played its part in ensuring that the intended Orchard Close (12 affordable homes) development was of a size and style acceptable to existing residents and continues to encourage suggestions for other sites such as those on the Twenty Pence and Histon Roads
- endeavour to: *establish a relationship with SCDC which effectively grants the Parish Council full participation in the decision making process on all planning issues directly related to the village*. On the one hand SCDC have met with us but the lack of consistency: a) in keeping the PC involved and, b) use of its own criteria continues to frustrate.

- *pursue with the police actions of 'best policy' to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour in the village.* This is a long-term objective but police reports to the Parish Council, and statistics presented at the Police Watch fora, have been encouraging. As a Council we are particularly pleased with the progress made by Alice Bullock and Julie Bristow through the Youth Clubs Scheme which seeks to find meaningful leisure time activities for younger members of the village.

Last year I thanked the Clerk, and all Councillors (Parish, District and County), for their hard work in support of the Parish, and I happily do so again, but before signing-off I have two final comments I wish to make:

1. to single out and thank, especially, Cllr Tony Nicholas because I feel his contributions on planning; pavements and traffic matters; safety at the recreation ground; and affordable housing (last year and this) deserve a special mention
2. to emphasise the importance of the Joint Villages Action Group. JAG was established in the hope that the authorities, in general, might respond to a collective voice better than they were responding to Parish councils in isolation.

Examples of this Parish Council being treated as part of the great unwashed (which should be seen but not heard) were our (PC) complete failures on three of last year's objectives to:

- engage the County Council & Anglian Water to: *respectively, adopt the roads and sewers on the Tenison Manor estate*
- open discussions with Anglian Water: *other areas of the village where sewers have yet to be adopted (eg. Lyles Rd )*
- *open discussions with SCDC, the Environment Agency and the OWIDB to determine ‘who is responsible for what’ drains & ditches in the Parish*

through the Clerk several attempts were made asking Anglia and the like talk to us – they did not even decline they (save for CCC who wrote to say that Tenison roads were not up to standard) simply ignored us.

JAG meanwhile was growing in status with County prepared to consider the joint view on hcv movements associated with major developments such as the Minerals & Waste; SCDC involving it fully in the Northstowe consultations; and the A14 developers talking through the concerns of the neighbouring villages.

JAG is now at something of a cross-roads being as some officers and/or members at District & County level are making demands for a constitution or are generally not happy to be dealing with a ‘pressure group’ albeit that if JAG is such then it is so at the request of its Parish Councils.

Cottenham PC has voted to continue support for JAG as through it, is seen, the best way to promote issues and concerns of common interest and, perhaps, the best way to persuade District and County councils both that their apparent approach of:

“ .. well that’s what the Parish says, now what are we going to do? .. “

is somewhat discourteous and a little disingenuous.

That’s it, thank you for your patience, any questions?