

# Annual Parish Meeting

## 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2014

### Chairman's Report

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#### **Introduction**

Thank you very much for coming this evening and a very warm welcome to our annual parish meeting.

The annual parish meeting covers the activities of the Parish Council, the District Council and the County Council over the past year. It also gives you the chance to raise issues and ask questions at the end of the meeting.

I would first like to thank all of our Councillors for giving what can be considerable amounts of their time and effort to the Parish. These Councillors are Rick Bristow, Graham Beckford, Sarah Berenger, Nigel Bolitho, Rex Collinson, Kate Heydon, Alan Leeks, David Mudd, Tony Nicholas, Tim Wotherspoon, Richard Brown, Alex Collier and Chris Richards. I would also like to thank our previous Chair, Mark Burton, who was recently forced to resign due to work commitments.

Next, I would like to thank all our staff, including our clerk, Jo Brook, our financial officer, Debbie Seabright and our groundsman, Andrew King. Jo has been working very hard for the past 12 months dealing with the many issues thrown at her, both by residents and the Parish Councillors. Debbie joined us in June last year and after quickly getting up to speed, has been looking after the parish financial affairs. Andrew has been working for the past 12 months, looking after all the green spaces in Cottenham as well as hedges, ditches, bins etc.

As a Parish Council we receive support, advice and comment from our two County Councillors David Jenkins & Mike Mason and from our three District Councillors Tim Wotherspoon, Lynda Harford & Simon Edwards and I would like to thank them for their support.

#### **Activities**

This year has been a bit of a mixed bag of successes and a few setbacks.

Starting with communications, we have been working hard to improve the ways we communicate with residents, both pushing information out to residents and getting feedback back from residents. We now have a new website which whilst not "complete", is providing regular updates and information and is allowing residents to send us comments back. The intention is to keep working on this website, both to keep it up to date and improve the range of information available. We also have a Facebook page which is proving very popular and excellent at quickly getting information to residents and we intend to keep using this as a means of communicating with the community.

A new project, called the Vision Plan, has been launched and is looking into what facilities the Parish Council should be concentrating on providing in the future. It is still in its early stages and the vision group is talking to as many residents and groups as possible to gather their views. The aim is to develop all these views into a business plan that can be presented to the village and then on to develop the needed facilities. The vision group has already spoken with at least eleven groups from the village and has its own Facebook page.

There have been many activities around the recreation ground in the last year

In May, the official opening of the new playground was held by Twinkle Star Childrens Trust. The playground has received lots of positive feedback and is clearly being well used.

The village hall has received a number of improvements over the last year. Thanks to volunteer painters and decorators from around the village, the hall has been given a fresh coat of paint, giving it a much cleaner look. In addition, the floor has also been resurfaced. We are also working on additional storage for the long term users of the hall and currently revisiting the existing changing rooms to try and make them acceptable until the new changing rooms are ready.

The changing rooms project is ongoing but has run into a few difficulties, as might be expected with a project of this scale. The project had got to the stage of signing contracts with the builder when the builder effectively pulled out of the project. We are now trying to negotiate with the original builder or find an alternative builder to take over the project without losing existing funding and without significant cost increases.

On the rec, the new Wheels Sports facility (previously known as the skate park) has made good progress over the year and a preferred supplier has now been chosen. Subject to funding, we hope this project may come to fruition later this year. It has been good to see some of the younger members of the community getting involved in something they are passionate about. In addition, a new 400m running track has been installed and we look forward to seeing it being well used over the summer.

Following the demise of the youth club at the college last year, the Parish Council have been subsidising the Connections Bus. The Connections Bus had previously only been made available during the summer months but this has been extended and the bus has been visiting the recreation ground every Thursday. The connections bus is a mobile youth drop-in facility aimed at supporting young people and it has been doing some excellent work with the teenage members of our community.

Unfortunately, we have been struck by three thefts at the recreation ground in the last year and we have lost a significant amount of the equipment used for grounds maintenance. The immediate impact was to make maintenance of our grounds more difficult. However, longer term issues such as obtaining insurance in the future have forced us look at how we go about green space maintenance in the future. This is an ongoing process and no decisions have yet been made.

There have been a number of activities on the roads in the last year.

After many years of flooding, the drainage issues have finally been rectified on Lambs Lane. Major resurfacing work has been carried out on the High Street and significant progress has been made on fixing potholes through-out the village. There will always be issues with pot holes and residents are encouraged to report these issues so that they can be dealt with promptly. Details of how to report these issues are available on the Parish Council website.

We have not made as much progress with traffic calming type road improvements as had been hoped. However, we have made some progress and will continue to work with the County Council to improve the safety on our roads through-out the village.

Other activities that the Parish Council have worked on include a major refurbishment of the war memorial, including the re-instatement of railings around the war memorial and improved access for wreath bearers. The war memorial is an important focal point in the village and we have received good feedback as a result of the work. We have also had a very successful carol concert on the village green and are thankful for the Christmas tree donated by Les Ward.

## **The Future**

This year is election year and on the 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2014, assuming there are sufficient nominations to trigger an election, an election will be held to form a new Parish Council. The future is then down to that new Parish Council.

However, we can try and predict a few of the priorities.

We will continue to hold statutory monthly business meetings together with planning meetings, assuming there are applications to consider.

The aim is to continue trying to improve the communications between the Parish Council and residents, be this through the new web site, through Facebook, the village magazine or through other means. All suggestions are welcome.

The expectation is that the vision plan project will continue. The vision group will continue to work with residents and groups to get a clear view of the types of facilities this village desires and will work toward a business plan intended to influence the decision making of the Parish Council.

The changing room project will continue. Although there have been a few issues recently, the changing rooms project is still on track to deliver a new changing room facility on the recreation ground for use by local sports teams.

The new Wheels Sport facility project will continue and in the not so distant future, we will have a new facility for the younger members of our community.

The traffic working party will continue to work with County Council Highways to try and improve the traffic situation in the village.

I would once again like to thank you for taking the time and attending this evening. I will now hand you over to our District Council, who will be followed by our County Council. We will be happy to take questions at the end of the meeting.