

## Annual Report 2016

### Some results

We completed two major capital projects and helped keep a Post Office in Cottenham.

We are resisting several speculative developments while working on our own Neighbourhood Development Plan to give us more control over where and how development occurs in future and tackle some fundamental challenges regarding how to keep Cottenham an attractive place and possibly slightly more affordable place to live.

We contributed a piece of public art to Cottenham Primary School and are in discussions about several other significant donations while continuing to support various local community events.

We continue to apply a more business-like, open and transparent approach to agendas, meetings and minutes which are all now published promptly. The changes cost Councillor time and increase demands on our staff who were already working hard, so we added some help.

Thanks to them and to you for trusting us to work on your behalf.

### Our Committees

We have five Committees meeting regularly in public:

- Planning Committee meets twice a month to advise South Cambridgeshire District Council on plans and consultations and make representations at Planning Committee meetings or Inquiries. Apart from the planning applications between Oakington and Rampton Roads, we worry about residents who fail to pre-notify tree work or apply for development permission in the Conservation area, post unpermitted advertising or just neglect their property.
- Community & Leisure Facilities Committee, which includes a number of co-opted representatives of Sports Clubs or key users, meets once a month to review maintenance issues and development projects related to our Open Spaces, Memorials, Play, Recreation and Sports facilities and the Village Hall. The picnic benches on the Moat and fitness kit on Tenison Manor are smaller examples of their efforts. The Neighbourhood Plan survey has given us confidence to begin planning our next major projects, especially the replacement Village Hall, and many other ideas.
- Finance Legal & Administration Committee typically meets once a month to review our financial position and administration matters. Close attention to our finances allowed us to finance the Changing Rooms and Skate Park without any loans or increases in Council Tax. Draft accounts are included later in this report.
- Highways Committee meets every other month to consider issues related to bridleways, cycle-paths, drains, highways and pavements; mostly trying to persuade our County Council or their contractors to do things they have a legal duty to do. Occasionally we pay for something that others cannot or will not provide like all-night lighting or child-designed street signs reminding drivers to take more care. We hope we will soon begin some work on our pavements and additional pedestrian crossings. The Neighbourhood Plan survey highlighted the issues we have with traffic and the group is proposing some radical solutions.
- Standards meet occasionally to consider the fortunately rare complaints against the Council and issues related to Councillor behaviour.

## **It's not all about Committees**

We also have several smaller, issue-focused Working Groups who meet informally - Burial Grounds, Changing Rooms, Human Resources, Neighbourhood Plan, Pedestrian Safety, Skate Park, Street Signs and Village Hall. We should also mention our Play Area Inspectors and Trees Officer who provide specialist advice to us and our Groundsman who keeps all our Open Spaces in order and helps us save money.

They all work alongside our Clerk, Responsible Financial Officer, Assistant Clerk, Caretaker and several contractors.

Some Councillors represent us on local charities, the Village College, Sustainable Cottenham and in the Emergency Co-ordination team.

We also appreciate the contribution of our partners – Cottenham United Sports & Social Club, Kids Only, Ladybirds, Cottenham Day Centre, aerobics etc. who all provide a social service and a contribution to our finances.

And we do try to help you enjoy yourselves through communal events we support like the Fen Edge Family Festival, the Yesteryear Road Run, the Feast Parade and Carol Concert last year and our upcoming Cottenham Festival.

During the year, we have provided small grants to several local charities

### **Key projects**

The new Skate Park and Changing Rooms are now in operation, following the opening last October by our Paralympian Dan West with support from our local MP, Heidi Allen. These projects require expertise, finance and persistence. Our thanks are offered to a number of past and present Councillors and those who have provided grants and our contractors for their expertise.

The New Changing Rooms were being built under the supervision of our architects Wilby & Burnett, by Durman Stearn, based here in the village, and C. J. Murfitt from Soham. Many people and organisations were key to completing this project, not least the substantial grants from the Football Foundation, Sport England and South Cambridgeshire District Council.

The Skatepark was built by Bristol-based Wheelscape. Key to this project, apart from the enthusiasm and patience of the skaters, was a generous grant from WREN, making the occasional whiff from the Milton recycling site almost worthwhile; other grants came from a Third Party Contributor and South Cambridgeshire District Council.

Apart from their value to sports people and skaters, these two projects alone create assets worth some £850,000 for the village by investing less than £300,000 of your money.

Our finances are still strong enough that we can consider upgrading our Village Hall. We have appointed architects for the first stage of this project. If we design it well, we could increase our income and reduce our costs so that it could be self-financing, albeit with capital help to get it off the ground. Maybe we can also harness the generosity of our community through donations, whether in cash or kind? Grants have a place too, as will some help from our cash reserves. The Working Group is developing a Business Plan, based on improving facilities to improve usage and revenue while reducing costs.

There are also some smaller projects that we hope to tackle in the coming months and years as we work through the information we gained from our consultations on community facilities and highways improvements. Look out for more fitness and play kit on some of our open spaces and more accessible walks around the village.

## Our finances

Our £204,000 precept was supplemented by over £366,000 in project grants and section 106 developer contributions of more than £200,000.

Our outgoings rose to pay for our major projects which were both completed within budget and have been met with wide approval. Our underlying costs fell due to delayed starts on some projects and some cost over-estimates.

Overall, our cash reserves increased from a little more than £510,000 to nearly £560,000. We also had our major assets revalued and raised the insurance on them accordingly.

We have added assets worth some £850,000 to the village balance sheet.

### Simplified Extract from Unaudited Preliminary 2015-2016 Accounts

Income	2015-16	2014-15
Precept	£204,098	£237,745
Recreation Ground Income	£37,315	£35,075
Donations & Grants	£13,139	£19,058
Project Grants	£366,502	
Other income (inc. s106 money)	£209,538	£27,916
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>£830,591</b>	<b>£319,794</b>

Expense	2015-16	2014-15
Office and admin	£51,548	£79,017
Professional services	£5,651	£6,926
Maintenance services	£25,141	£20,405
Donations & Grants	£16,646	£27,499
Facilities costs	£65,037	£19,497
Project costs	£615,794	£0
Finance charges	£6,354	£6,285
<b>Total expense</b>	<b>£786,172</b>	<b>£159,629</b>

Cash	2015-16	2014-15
<b>Current year Surplus (Deficit)</b>	£44,419	£153,821
<b>Previous Surplus plus reserves</b>	£513,311	

Net Short-term assets	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2016	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2015
Current cash assets (reserves)	£558,730	£513,311
Allocations (approx.):		
General Reserve	£100,000	
Capital Fund	£82,000	
Loan Fund	£179,000	
S106 Community Facilities	£29,000	
S106 Open Space	£148,000	
S106 Public Art	£20,000	
<b>Net short-term assets</b>	<b>£558,000</b>	

Net Long-term assets (excluding land)	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2016	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2015
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,878,428</b>	<b>£631,641</b>
<b>Key elements:</b>		
• Village Hall (revalued)	£428,000	
• Ladybirds (revalued)	£499,000	
• Sports Pavilion (new)	£640,000	
• SkatePark (new)	£75,000	

## **Some disappointments**

We, along with many other South Cambridgeshire villages, have attracted the attention of several speculative developers. We are opposing these developments and have engaged several consultants to help.

Traffic issues continue to plague many of our residents and may get much worse before they can be improved.

Some of our heritage buildings are suffering from neglect with the state of the listed Gothic House at one extreme, incomplete developments in the middle, and ill-advised modernisations of some Conservation Area properties at the other.

We have too many selfish residents. Some dog owners fail to clean up their dog's mess; too many people fly-post their events or activities without permission others speed through our streets.

## **Taking control**

Keeping a village vibrant and a place where youngsters aspire to live independently with their own families requires a balance between conservation and development. Without modest growth, our village will die under pressure from traffic and unaffordable house prices. Our youth will choose to live and work elsewhere or be forced to live with their parents.

Some more affordable housing will be required as will new or improved facilities, not just for sport but also for small business, not just for the old and less mobile but also for the young. Development could provide better facilities for pre-school children, a Medical Centre combined with Day Centre for the elderly or new units for small businesses; although we need to be aware of the pressure on our schools. It could also open up our fen edge countryside to increase leisure possibilities.

The Neighbourhood Development Plan, if adopted, could bring more control over how and where development takes place, more community facilities and a greater share of any related financial settlements, possibly through use of a Community Land Trust. That Community Land Trust could ensure that some housing remains affordable for Cottenham folk forever. We have completed the survey to identify residents' most serious issues and are now consulting on a range of options to incorporate in the draft plan later in 2016.

## **Conclusion**

121 years since Cottenham Parish Council first met, it is good to see Cottenham residents – young and old - contributing to the community in so many ways. This year's outstanding contribution must be from Jigneth Amin - Jigs – who at some personal risk, has stepped in to keep a Post Office service in Cottenham; and now open for us all to use or lose.

To finish, thanks to our staff and contractors for helping us to do our job, keeping us in touch with your problems so we can perhaps help in any way we are able. And thanks to you for trusting us.