

## **Chairman's Report April 2024**

2023 was a business as usual year – with a number of events taking place within the parish. Elections for the parish council were due to be held in May but given the number of candidates these were uncontested. This was disappointing as local democracy depends on people in the community volunteering and fulfilling these roles that are part of the governance of this country.

Myself, Mike Webb, Clare Kay, Peter Wood and Andrew Gill were elected in May. John Baldock has subsequently joined the council and we are still seeking to fulfil the one outstanding role by co-option as soon as possible.

The roles are not onerous from a time viewpoint as we seek to run this council in a simple yet effective way – the focus being on fulfilling our regulatory requirements, liaising with both the South Norfolk District and Norfolk County Councils, helping to maintain the environment and supporting local groups who want to run events.

The parish benefits from having a number of active community groups which make use of the facilities in the Parish - Welborne Village Hall, the Runhall Allotments, the Runhall Play Area and the Exchange (in the Old Phone Box in Runhall) – and the local churches. Details of their activities will be covered in their own separate reports. The council has supported these groups throughout 2023 including facilitating obtaining grants from the district council.

In 2023 there was one village event linked to the national celebrations of the Kings coronation. The Runhall Community Group organised a Paint & Picnic in the Park on Monday 8th May.

### **Planning**

We continue to review all planning applications in our parish that are relevant, albeit there was a significant reduction in the number received in 2023 – 6 down from 13 in 2022.

The Parish Council was supportive or neutral on 5 of the applications and raised objections on 1. South Norfolk approved all 6 but did include certain conditions on the one we objected to that mitigated the issues raised by the council. It is helpful for any planning discussions at the council if the residents who are making the planning applications decisions attend the planning meetings.

### **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

It has been a challenging year given the pressure on local council finances and the impacts of the weather on the road and drainage systems but we have had some successes.

Everyone in the parish can help by ensuring all Highways issues are reported promptly via the Norfolk County Council online system, which ensures they are in Highways prioritisation system.

### **PROW's**

All the PROW's are reviewed on a regular basis by our four PROW wardens and any issues raised with Norfolk County Council who have responsibility for them. The council would like to thank these people for their work during the year. The PROW's have remained generally in good condition throughout the year, with only occasional issues caused by heavy rainfall.

**Litter**

All of our four villages currently have volunteer Litter Wardens in place. They work throughout the year removing litter from the local area and thus improving the environment. The roadside verges remain the main problem areas. The council is very grateful for the job they do and would like to thank them for their efforts. It is also important that everyone in the parish takes care of the parish to ensure it remains a pleasant living area.

**Budgets**

The council has run a balanced budget over the past year and aims to do so again in 2004. Whilst there have been some inflationary increases the Council has been able to minimise the impact the Parish Council precept which has risen by less than 1%.

**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. Our neighbourhood has a low level of crime and disorder. The main priorities for the local police in our neighbourhood are Speeding and Theft.

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.

**Communication**

The newsletter has been distributed following most council meetings – thank you to the team of volunteers who do the distribution. The parish website is kept up-to-date but is not used much by parishioners.

**Future Activity**

The council will continue keeping on top of business as usual whilst supporting parishioners in any extra activity.

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.

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.

Finally 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 17 April 2024