

Chairman's Annual Report 2016

Good evening everyone! 2015-2016 has once again been a very active year and I am indebted to all Councillors and Parish Council staff who have put time and effort into this past year to achieve what it has.

Councillors, have this year, completed their 4-year term. Some have taken the decision to re-stand for election and as fewer candidates were nominated than the number of places available, the seats are uncontested and an election will not be necessary. However, in May we look forward to welcoming Alan Samm and Sandy Sastry as new members to the Council. Rachel and Philip Dale and Andrew Kessell are standing down from the council. Rachel and Philip have been councillors for the last four years and Andrew has served for 15 years. My sincere thanks to them for their considerable efforts in that time.

This means that members are in office for the next 2 years as elections then become aligned with other district elections.

I would also like to thank the whole community who have helped in various projects throughout the year.

So what has been achieved this year?

Longstanton can now boast that we have a fully qualified Clerk as Libby White completed and passed her CiLCA training at the end of 2015. Congratulations and many thanks for all your help and support.

Once again I would personally like to thank Libby for organising the Village Litter Pick which again gets a lot of Community involvement and makes the Village look presentable. Thank you to everyone who participates in the Litter picks.

Thanks also go to the ladies group who organise the Over 60s Christmas dinner. A lunch very much enjoyed by so many of the village.

Following the successful transformation of the phone box on the High Street to a book swap (which has been recently extended) the Parish Council also adopted the phone box at St Michaels. This too will be transformed into a book swap. The Parish Council has been pleasantly surprised at how well the community has received this facility.

Home Farm is almost complete and my thanks go to the Home Farm Forum without whom we would not be in the positive financial situation for the maintenance of Home Farm play areas and public open spaces going forward. I know there are still some legacy problems like road adoption and the Central Open Space but the handovers from the various housebuilders is now almost complete.

Northstowe

As you are probably aware, Phase 1 is just starting with of the digging out of the balancing ponds on Hattons Road. It is anticipated that these will help to mitigate flooding of Longstanton in the future and the movement of the soil to the Phase 1 site will raise the level of the land there.

Views of residents continue to be represented as work continues with Phase 2. It has been a very busy year and it will be getting busier.

With the Northstowe ‘Pathfinder’ school almost finished and no inhabitants of Northstowe, Hattons Park School will move, temporarily into this new school while work is carried out to improve and increase capacity of Hattons Park.

Councillor Riley and County Councillor Hudson will have more to say on these so I will keep my report very short here.

On the first weekend in December we had a brand new event “Switching on the Christmas Lights” something that is going to be continued this year so save the date - Saturday 3rd December 2016. This year it will be bigger and better and hopefully gale free. Thanks to everyone who helped on that evening.

The Recreation Ground Playground has been a great success and we are now looking at what we can do for the older children in the village and these consultations are ongoing. We need to provide something for our young people as our village grows.

Thank you very much to Steve Smith for his continued support in keeping the village websites up to date and current.

You may have noticed that we have 2 much needed replacement bus shelters on the High Street.

All these things go towards making our village look and feel a better place to live in.

Village finances

The council has now received a number of commuted sums from Home Farm developers, which is ring-fenced for the long-term maintenance of those areas. With over £600,000 in its bank accounts, the Parish Council feels it is important for parishioners to understand exactly what these monies are. So, in this report I will explain the figures in detail. Councils are governed by law as to what monies they can raise, hold and how they can spend the money they have, so hopefully the following will lead to a greater understanding.

In addition, due to a change in legislation (which allows a degree of protection should banks fail) the monies are in the process of being placed in different bank accounts (based on independent advice) and earning higher rates of interest. Minutes of Finance Committee meetings itemise all these arrangements but I hope this gives some understanding as to how we are in relation to the finances of the Council.

All figures are taken from the bank accounts as at 31st March 2016.

There is £220,481.36 in the ‘Current’ account, (£75,000 of which is the Reserves Account money which was in the process of being transferred) which is directly from the precept and a large VAT refund from the recent refurbishment of the playground. The precept is the local portion of what we all pay through our council tax. This account is used to pay for all the budget items agreed on an annual basis agreed by Council in November/December each year. This is essentially for the running costs of the village.

The Reserves held by the Council stands at £75,210.55 (in the process of being transferred for safeguarding). Legislation states that this money is held for emergencies (by law, this must cover a minimum of 6-months costs) and was the amount missing when we came to

office 4 years ago. This was restored by a temporary increase in the precept of £25,000 per year for the last three years.

The 'Home Farm' Account holds £315,902.51. This money is known as 'commuted sums'. It is paid to the Parish Council by the various developers of Home Farm to cover future maintenance costs of certain areas or items that the Council has adopted and will maintain at public expense. This money needs to last for 10 years and can only be used for the purposes stated.

The 'Section 106' account has £66,386.31, which can only be used on specifically stated items contained within a Section 106 Agreement. Section 106 agreements are made with developers and the Local Planning Authority to contribute to community areas following developments within the area. This money has arisen from developments such as the Co-op, shops and other smaller developments within the village (*but not the Home Farm development*). This money can only be used on children's play, sport and informal open spaces.

There are two other accounts: a 'Deposit' account of just over £1,000.00 and a 'Community Reserves' account holding £591.78 (monies raised from the WEEE Electrical Waste Collection but with no designated purpose as yet).

On that note I now welcome any questions.

Gill Ashby