



## **BURSTON AND SHIMPLING PARISH COUNCIL**

### **Chairman's Report 2020-2021**

THIS year has been challenging in many ways, due to the Covid pandemic, the resultant 'lock downs' and restrictions on 'normal' activities, and the pre-Christmas flood. However, the Parish Council has been functioning with as much normality as possible.

The first 'lock down' was already in place at the beginning of the year. Our first Parish Council meeting was really just an exchange of emails, but the next meeting, and all of the following meetings, were held on Zoom, and so were open to the public,

During the year Isobel Pugh resigned from the Council for personal reasons. We thank Isobel for her contribution to the council while she was with us. Also during the year two new councillors were co-opted: Mike Warwick, who was already serving as the Emergency Co-Ordinator, and, almost at the end of the year, John Mallows.

Ann Baker is the Clerk, and she does a tremendous job organising Council meetings and writing the minutes, and provides all the necessary administration and 'back-office' services for the council.

During the year Alison Wakeham, our Vice-Chair, was the Responsible Financial Officer, our 'lead' on planning, and maintained the website. She was also our representative on the Diss and District Neighbourhood Plan. Christine Stevens has been responsible for footpaths, and has edited and produced our quarterly full colour magazine 'The Planet', and has been in charge of liaison with Burston House. Keith Cowley has been responsible for the playing field and community orchard, and the SAM camera. Isobel Pugh organised the Don Swanton Award and the application for grant aid for a defibrillator for Shimpling. Angela Belgrove has been responsible for safeguarding and liaison with the school, and is our litter-pick organiser. John Mallows was co-opted onto Council during the last meeting of the year, and will be helping with the Neighbourhood Plan. Lindsey Bilston has been our Tree Warden. Jim Rudd has dealt with highway matters, arranging meetings with a member of Norfolk County Council Highways team. Jim is the organiser of the local speedwatch team, but during lockdown it has not been practicable to have speedwatch sessions. Mike Warwick has been busy during the year as our Emergency Co-ordinator. Philip Stevens has been our flag officer.

Without all of these people doing what they do, the Parish Council would not function, so may I express my personal thanks to them all for all being members of a very effective team.

Throughout the year the Council has provided the necessary services to maintain our villages. The Council has had regular meetings, and has done all the things that a Parish Council usually does, but which are only really noticed when they are not done. This has been achieved 'within budget', and, despite that fact that Parish Councils no longer receive any support from South Norfolk Council, for the coming year we have managed to prepare a budget that only increases the tax on a Band D house by £1 per year.

During our meetings this year we have considered many planning applications for building works within the parish. We have liaised with representatives of the Norfolk Highways department, and our meetings with them have led to various improvements and repairs which otherwise might not have been done. The SAM camera that we share with the Parish of Tivetshall has been in the Parish every alternate month. This camera indicates to motorists how fast they are travelling, and has the effect of slowing down speeders. The camera also records how many vehicles it detects, and the speed of each one, as well as the time of day. This information is passed to the Police who use it to send traffic officers to set up speed traps at times of day when the data shows speeders are coming through our villages. We have made efforts to ensure that our footpath network is accessible at all times, and that the paths are signposted appropriately. We have liaised with local landowners, and in many cases they have been able to help us.

We have maintained the playing field, having the grass cut by contractors, having the play equipment inspected on a weekly basis to spot any safety issues before they become serious, and having a RoSPA inspector carry out an annual detailed inspection. A fence has been erected around the BMX track. Extensive plans have been made by a working party of councillors and residents to re-purpose the playing field as the large area of grass that was used in the past as a football pitch was felt to be unnecessary, because the last 'proper' football match was played over 15 years ago. The plans include a seven-a-side football pitch (large enough for the air-ambulance to land on) a wooded area, and a wildflower meadow, together with a peripheral path and trim-trail equipment. Requests have been made, successfully, for funding. The people who use the BMX track have also carried out some works over the year, further improving the track and the quality of the jumps. We have maintained the churchyard in Shimpling, and contributed to the maintenance of the churchyard in Burston. We supported the village youth groups. We organised the Don Swanton Award which was awarded to Tommy Bloomfield at an open-air ceremony on Church Green.

During the year Hadleigh Drake, the village caretaker, has kept the village tidy, cutting grass, trimming hedges, and emptying rubbish bins.

Councillors have been involved in on-going meetings regarding a Neighbourhood Plan for Diss and the surrounding parishes, and also the Greater Norwich Development Plan.

We are assisting, where possible, in the establishment of a high speed broadband network. During the year many homes in the village have been connected, and it is hoped that the whole village network will be completed during the spring.

It was not possible to hold the usual St. George's Day Service in April and the Candle-lit Carols in December in the Church of St. George in Shimpling, a Grade 1\* listed, but redundant, church

From the spring of 2020 onwards the Emergency Plan was operational, under the emergency co-ordinator Mike Warwick, as the Parish was in lockdown, and when vulnerable residents were self-isolating. Volunteers helped with shopping, collecting prescriptions, etc. Mike paired up volunteers with those in need. Our thanks go to Mike, and to all of those who volunteered and also to Bev and Steve at the Burston Crown who initiated a free-food table at the start of the lock down, and Suzi Silva who, on her own volition, ran a Food Bank in the Chapel, obtaining food from Morrisons, and also delivering food parcels to those in the village who needed them, as well as

organising Christmas hampers of presents for children. Volunteers also helped with several homes that were flooded after the torrential rain on 23<sup>rd</sup> December.

The December rain fell on already-saturated fields, and there was significant flooding in the Pug Street and Hall Lane areas of Shimpling, where water depths reached 40 cm in some homes, and there was further flood damage in Burston, and some 'near-misses' in Audley End and near Wolsey Bridge. Detailed reports were prepared and forwarded to Norfolk County Council and South Norfolk Council. Our local councillors have been active in helping to establish a Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance, with the objective of co-ordinating remedial works intended to prevent a repetition of the flooding as well as developing a long term strategy to mitigate future events caused by global climate change.

All of this does not happen on its own, and I am very grateful to all who have helped. In addition to my thanks to all of the councillors, I must express gratitude to all of those who help the villages and the community in any way. Farmers contribute behind the scenes to village events, and also pay for Church Green to be mowed, as well as arranging for our full colour quarterly Parish magazine, The Planet, to be printed, and this year provided a defibrillator to be installed in Shimpling. Bev and Steve at the Burston Crown have helped the local community in many ways in this trying year, and have been very innovative in keeping their business up and running, opening a shop and then a 'deli' as well as providing beach huts for al fresco dining. The Mann family of the Thelveton Estate help in many ways, and are always willing to co-operate. Many other villagers 'do their bit' to help keep our Parish a pleasant place to live, and my thanks go to them all.

Nigel Frankland (Chairman)