

It's a real pleasure to be able to sit in our village hall and present to you my Chairman's report. I am sure you will agree that one thing 2020 has taught us, is not to take even the simple things in life for granted. It has been a very challenging year for many.

Due to Covid restrictions in place last year, it wasn't possible for us to hold our AGM and so we continued the year with everyone retaining their positions from the previous year.

I would like to thank everyone for attending this year's AGM and to welcome Vicky Bright as our new clerk to her first AGM and indeed her first Parish council meeting.

For many years now my account has always included a report on large scale development within the district which we have considered would have a detrimental impact on our village. Whilst news relating to development at Hatchfield farm is not necessarily "new news", I was unable to present a chairmans report last year and I feel it is important that it is finally noted that Hatchfield Farm was approved for development and would appear in the Core Strategy document for the district. As you are aware, the racing community in Newmarket has opposed development on the Hatchfield Farm site, resulting in the planned development for the district being forced out of the more sustainable market town, into the rural villages, particularly Red Lodge. Following many lengthy and costly legal hearings and public enquiries, it was finally agreed that Hatchfield farm would be allocated as a site within the Local plan. I am sure you will agree this has been a very challenging period for those volunteers and individuals who have attended many public enquiries and High Court hearings. I would like to thank all those who worked so hard to ensure a sustainable and sequential approach to development across our district.

It remains essential that we continue to participate in the appropriate placement of future houses and we welcome the opportunity to engage with and help guide the new local plan emerging for West Suffolk. We will continue to oppose inappropriate development which affects Herringswell, doesn't follow a sequential approach, and is in areas void of the infrastructure to support housing growth.

Covid restrictions throughout last year, meant that unfortunately we were unable to hold many of our meetings in person. We were fortunate enough to be able to hold one meeting in the village hall during a period of government easing. We have thankfully had a quiet year and so were able to conduct much of the Council business via emails and a teams meeting. Unfortunately, since our last meeting in person, Sandra our clerk left and I would like to take this opportunity to thank Sandra for her time spent working as clerk for us. Gloria very helpfully stepped in as interim clerk and did a wonderful job. Thank you so much for seeing us through that period Gloria and in addition for assisting Vicky into her role within Herringswell PC.

Vicky is an experienced clerk and manages several of the Parish Councils locally. I am really pleased and grateful that she has agreed to share her knowledge and experience with us and join our team.

Flooding of The Street near the Church continues to pose a problem, but it would appear that work is expected to commence in this area within the next few weeks. We are grateful to all those involved who have helped move this forward over the past year.

Alan Nunn has continued to maintain the village verges and rose bushes to an exceptionally high standard and we are all grateful for the work he does to keep the village looking smart and well maintained.

The Parish Council welcomes the help of residents who offer their time or support the village in anyway possible to help maintain the special character of this unique village. This year has seen improvements made to the war memorial and I would like to take this opportunity to thank Hugo Upton for attending to that. It has restored the entrance to the village and once again demonstrates the gratitude to those from this village who gave their lives.

We also had to have several trees removed from outside the Church which had outgrown their setting. Gary Brown and his team, soon took that matter in hand and the trees have been expertly removed, avoiding any further damage to the ancient flint wall bordering the church yard.

Small communities like Herringswell often rely on a volunteer base and with two lovely, but very old community buildings within the village (the church and village hall) we are very fortunate that people are prepared to give up their time running both facilities. I would like to thank those individuals who are members of the church committee and the village hall committee who work to ensure the upkeep and maintenance of these facilities. Thank you.

I would like to thank District Cllrs Dawn and Mick for their attendance at our meetings and their support of Herringswell. We are grateful to them for ensuring the village is kept informed and up to date even on the occasions when attendance in person isn't possible. They have generously provided the Parish with funds from their locality budget to replace the notice boards within the village which we really appreciate. Thank you.

It has been an election year for Cllr Drummond and he was success in the elections and has returned as our County representative. Last year, Andy provided the funds for two defibrillators for the village. One is intended to be sited outside the gates at the Manor and one outside the village hall. This project is still at the early stages of planning and will require a team of people to take this forward, but we are most grateful to Andy for this opportunity.

Finally I would like to thank all the Herringswell Parish Councillors for your commitment to the Parish and attending our meetings. I know it has been a challenging year and the future for public meetings still may prove spasmodic, but I am confident that we will continue to fulfill our roles acting in the interest of the residents of Herringswell. I am very grateful for your support