

## North Elmham Parish Council Annual Parish Meeting - 29<sup>th</sup> May 2019

### Chairman's Report

As I did last year, I would like to begin my report by thanking all parish councillors, past and present, for their continued hard work on behalf of the village, which is carried out without fear or favour.

Local council and parish council elections were conducted on 2<sup>nd</sup> May. The elections to our parish council were uncontested, because there were eleven nominations for eleven places. We were sad to lose Debbie Warner earlier this year, as she had been an energetic and conscientious member of the council, but warmly welcome Michael Rayner in her place. Michael has already agreed to bring his considerable experience and expertise to our planning group.

Perhaps the most significant event of this last year was the threat, from development consultants Lanpro, of the construction of a new garden town of up to 10,000 dwellings between Elmham, Billingford and Bintree. We joined forces with residents from other villages and a campaign group was set up under the chairmanship of Diana Dann, an erstwhile resident of the parish. Everyone, including our two district councillors and our MP, was very energetic in resisting these proposals and the result was that Breckland Council did not support Lanpro's proposal, which ultimately failed. However, we are aware that the threat has not disappeared entirely, and the working group remains vigilant and ready to resume the fight should Lanpro resurrect its proposal. I would like to thank all those council members and parishioners who wrote to our MP and to Breckland District Council to fight this proposal.

Following receipt of the £40,000 payment from Shared Access for the lease of the mobile phone mast site, the PC circulated a questionnaire asking parishioners for their views on how the money should be spent. A significant proportion of the replies favoured measures to reduce speeding in Holt Road and Station Road. As a result, we have bought and installed two new SAM2 speed signs on Station Road. These, together with the existing signs on Holt Road, record the number of vehicles and their speed and the data is collated to give a picture of the problem. Unfortunately, both the police and Norfolk County Council have confirmed that they do not routinely gather and use the resulting information in order to set up speed traps and prosecute offenders. We are disappointed with their joint response and continue to press them for positive action in assisting us to reduce the speed of traffic in our village.

The build-out on Holt Road, for which we obtained (and have paid) 50% of the costs under the Parish Partnership scheme, finally gets under way on 28<sup>th</sup> May. This will involve the closure of Holt Road for approximately four days. Highways have promised to repaint the double yellow lines at the Tea Post bend at the same time.

The proposed new parking scheme towards the western end of Eastgate Street is still under discussion. Once the design is finalised and consultations with residents completed, we hope to get final costings and confirmation of the amount that the PC is required to contribute so that the project can go ahead. Special thanks are due to Paul Grainger and Peter Wade Martins for their continuing work on all these highways matters.

A street light in Holt Road was destroyed in a road traffic accident last August was finally replaced on May 8<sup>th</sup>. The new light in Larch Grove was connected last July. Thank you Tom for looking after our lights and liaising with Westcotec.

We appointed a new grounds maintenance company, CGM Group, in April to carry out all the work on the recreation ground, the village green, Millennium Wood, the pound and the grassed area around the Broom Green pond. We are pleased with the standard of their work after a shaky start.

Longham Football Club used the football pitch last season. Unfortunately for us, they have been promoted to a higher league and therefore require upgraded clubhouse facilities, which we are unable to provide. Consequently, they will not be renting the football pitch next season. The cricket club, however, continues to make use of the cricket field and pitch, and we hope that the club will thrive.

The stock proof fencing and gates at Church Meadow have now been completed and thanks are due to Peter Wade Martins and the residents of Church Farm for making this happen. Also, alterations were made to the entrances to the village green and Millennium Wood to ensure easier access for people with restricted mobility. We hope that parishioners continue to enjoy using these beautiful assets.

A considerable amount of work has been undertaken to the land around the chapel ruins, including the planting of a new hedge on the northern and eastern boundaries. Thanks are due to Julian Duffield for his good work: English Heritage, with whom we have entered into a new management and maintenance contract, has expressed its satisfaction with the standard of the work.

Mike Gower and Jimmy Brown organised a litter pick on 12<sup>th</sup> April, in which about 30 parishioners took part. This was deemed to be a great success, so many thanks to everyone who gave up their time and particularly to Jimmy and Mike. I would also like to acknowledge, yet again, the hard work undertaken by Jimmy and his valiant team of volunteers in keeping our village in such excellent order.

A memorial oak tree, purchased by the British Legion to commemorate 100 years since the signing of the WW1 armistice, was planted on the village green in October. The ceremony was marked with singing by the Elmham School children and prayers from Rev Sally Kimmis.

Two new detailed information signs have been installed, one on the recreation ground car park and the other outside the chapel ruins.

Our village website continues to be an extremely useful resource, and thanks are due to Sue and Ivan Ball for maintaining and updating this at no charge to the Council.

With regard to future plans, the PC hopes to be able to make progress on refurbishment and possible rebuilding of the Memorial Hall. This is likely to be a long term project which will require energy and commitment if it is to succeed.

Another highly successful church fete was held on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> May. We were blessed with good weather and teams of enthusiastic volunteers. A huge thank you to Tom and Jo for so generously opening up their lovely home.

Finally, and at the risk of repeating myself, huge thanks to Martin Phillips for his invaluable support to me, and for his expert work on the accounts of the Council as well as three of the village charities. I could also not perform the duties of Chair without the guidance and support of our clerk, Kevin, who is efficient and encouraging in equal measure.

**Jennie Borgnis**

