

Hardingham Parish Council – Annual Report – April 2022

The last two years have seen the Parish Council, like the rest of the country, having to navigate its way through various covid restrictions and this has, inevitably, had some impact on the way that we communicated and interacted with residents of the village.

As a consequence, last year's Annual Parish Meeting was conducted online via Zoom. It is therefore a pleasure to look forward to meeting again in person this year at the Memorial Hall on Monday the 9th May at 7:00pm. We attach a notice to that effect and hope that lots of you will be able to attend.

In addition to the Annual Parish Meeting, it is also great to see the village returning to normal activities with May and June offering various opportunities to come together and celebrate. In this regard, we also attach information on arrangements for the Platinum Jubilee celebrations in early June and it's a delight to see the Annual Village Fete back at the end of June.

Parish Business has very much continued over the past 12 months and set out below is a brief report on the key areas of activity:

General Reporting

By way of a quick reminder – Agendas for Parish Meetings and minutes of meetings can be found on the noticeboard, outside the Memorial Hall and on our website:

<https://hardinghamparish.wixsite.com/home>

The website also contains details of Finances, Policies, Procedures, Contact Details and Standing Orders etc. For further information please contact our Parish Clerk, Heidi Frary on – email:

hardinghamparish@gmail.com tel: 01603 759215.

Planning

We continue to receive information on all Planning Applications within the Village Boundaries, through Breckland Council who are the Planning Authority. Where appropriate, we seek feedback and views of residents, particularly neighbours and those in the close vicinity. We strive to remain objective and understand the views of both applicants and the wider village, before providing comments to Breckland Council.

In addition to specific applications, we liaise closely with Breckland Councillors over evolving Planning Policy, both at District, County and National government levels. Clearly, we are mindful here of the impact and implications of new policies on the village and its residents.

Highways

We maintain a close liaison with Norfolk County Council's Highways Team. This includes reporting and monitoring repairs (potholes, drainage problems etc).

We also consult them over such matters as speed limits, in which respect, we have lobbied for the introduction of new limits in certain parts of the village. This can be a frustrating process, as the

Highways Team operate against a strict set of criteria. We are advised that these criteria are currently under review and we will be monitoring this closely and seeking to provide further feedback.

In addition to road maintenance and management, we also liaise with the Highways Team over the maintenance of footpaths. We are fortunate to benefit from a fairly extensive network of public and permissive footpaths in Hardingham and the majority of these are well maintained. Where necessary, we will engage with Highways if any issues are encountered.

Maintenance and Upkeep

Unlike many parishes, the Parish Council does not own any land, but we do own various assets and contribute to the maintenance of other amenities. This includes:

- The Bus Shelter on High Common and bench adjacent to this.
- Grass and hedge cutting around the Memorial Hall
- Grass cutting around the Church
- Village Notice Boards Outside the Memorial Hall
- The Village Sign on High Common.

We are particularly grateful over the last year to our County Councillor, Ed Connolly, who has assisted us in securing funding from the County Council towards both a new bench, by the bus shelter and more latterly and in conjunction with the Memorial Hall Committee, new notice boards. We would also express our appreciation to Hardingham Farms for installing the notice boards.

Litter Picking

It is appropriate to record our huge appreciation to Nigel Ford and a number of residents who have rallied to Nigel's call and regularly undertake litter picks across the village. Thank you, Nigel, for organising this and to all of those who participate.

Annual Audit

The Annual Audit of Parish Council finances and activities will take place during April, with the details being shared on the website during May.

Connectivity

We seek to communicate with residents and promote some support and connectivity across the village community through several routes including:

Website: As mentioned above, a range of information can be found on our website at - <https://hardinghamparish.wixsite.com/home>

Facebook: At the outset of the pandemic we set up a Facebook site; Hardingham Village – Residents and Friends. This has now grown to 63 members and is a useful source of information on local activities and events. For those who like to use social media, please feel free to join it.

Noticeboards: See the noticeboard outside the Village Hall

Newsletters: We will, from time to time distribute newsletters/communications on specific topics.

Direct Contact with Councillors – A list of Councillors is provided on our website and please feel free to contact them through our Parish Clerk, Heidi Frary. Email: hardinghamparish@gmail.com tel: 01603 759215. Heidi can also be contacted directly with any general Parish Council queries and will be happy to help.

Homewatch

Following the retirement of Heather Johnson from the role of Homewatch co-ordinator, we are delighted to advise that Sarah Bailey has taken on the role. Sarah can be contacted on hardinghamhomewatch@gmail.com – Our thanks too, to Heather for all of her work in undertaking the role.

Initiatives

We liaise closely with a number of stakeholder and interest groups on specific topics. This will include: Breckland Council, Norfolk County Council and our MP, George Freeman.

We also liaise with other parish councils where common challenges and issues are faced. This currently includes:

- An initiative with adjacent parishes to call for improvements to the B1135.
- An initiative to mitigate the impacts of a massive project across Norfolk to bring offshore windfarm energy inland. Whilst absolutely supporting sustainable energy projects, we are part of a group calling for an Offshore Transmission Network (OTN), rather than having this energy brought ashore through a huge infrastructure project, the associated construction works for which will have a wide range of environmental and disruptive influences across the county.

We will post updates on our website, from time to time as they become available and of course discuss these further in Parish Council meetings when appropriate.

Parish Councillors

A list of the current serving councillors is to be found on the website, as noted above. In this respect, it is appropriate to record our thanks and best wishes to Binny Lenihan, who retired from the Council in the year and extend a welcome to Paul Hawkshaw who joined us.

If anybody is interested in becoming a Parish Councillor in the future, do please register your interest with our Clerk, Heidi Frary. It's great to welcome new people and new ideas and strive to have a representative cross section of the village community on the Council.

Thanks

Finally, it is appropriate to record our thanks for all of the support and assistance provided by, in particular:

- Our County Councillor, Ed Connolly
- Our Breckland District Councillors, Paul Claussen and Ian Martin
- Heidi Frary, our Parish Clerk, without whose, expertise, energy and guidance, we would struggle.

We do hope that you have found this brief report to be helpful and do please feel free to raise any questions or provide any feedback.

With very best wishes

Dudley George

Chair

Hardingham Parish Council