



# Chairman's Report 2015

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This report is prompted by the need for Council to keep you informed of what we do...made more pressing as we approach a new four year term of office, by the need to fill two Councillor vacancies. These vacancies could impact adversely on how effectively we serve you, and I urge you to seriously consider these vacancies and whether you should put yourself forward for one of them.

However it has been a good year and the new projects I mooted last year have either materialised into reality, are about to implemented or are now part of our successful history.

I should point out that this report highlights a representative sample only of the activities that we are currently addressing and so there are many other areas not included here that keep Members engaged with Parish affairs.

## 2. WELCOME TO OUR NEW PARISH CLERK

In July last year we were able to appoint Ann Baker as our Parish Clerk. Ann is also Clerk to Dickleburgh and Rushall Parish Council and so she brings with her a wealth of experience which will be put to good use with Burston and Shimpling.

I cannot over- state the importance of the Parish Clerk role. In a very real sense, Ann will be the 'engine' of the Parish Council. She is our principal executive and adviser, and is the officer responsible for the administration of our financial affairs.

And so on behalf of us all, I extend to her a very warm welcome.

## 3. COUNCILLOR RESIGNATION

During the year one of Members, Keith Lankester, resigned. Keith was active with the WW1 Memorial Garden project and served on our Playing Field Advisory Committee. His knowledge and advice on horticultural matters was particularly appreciated.

## 4. NEW COUNCILLOR DESIGNATE

While the recent call for nominations did not attract enough interest to necessitate an election, I am able to welcome Piers Bilston whose appointment to Council will be formalised at our AGM on 18 May. I wish him a long and rewarding time with the Council team.

## 5. ANNUAL BUDGET AND PRECEPT

The precept is our share of the council tax and the precept demand that we set goes to our billing authority, the District Council. Thanks to careful budgeting we were able to meet our objective of virtually flat lining our year on year precept charge. The precept requirement was £9,990 last year and for 2015/16 it is £10, 143.

We try to reach the right balance with our budgeting. We do this by making sufficient provision for the maintenance of our built and natural environments, funding current projects and services,

and providing for the future with adequate but not excessive reserves. Importantly, we do this while minimising our administration costs.

While our new Clerk, Ann, becomes acquainted with our systems, Alison Wakeham has been working closely with her on the management of our financial affairs and I am grateful to them both for their work in this direction.

## **6. BURSTON COUNTY PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Carol Green, the Head of Burston and Tivetshall Primary Schools, has approached Council to consider improvements to the School frontage. Discussions are at an early stage but the outline plan is to provide a layby for parking together with the planting of shrubs for landscaping purposes. Much will depend on the findings of a feasibility report which has been requested from NCC Highways, and of course costs and funding will influence any final decision.

## **7. PLAYING FIELD PROJECTS PROGRESS REPORT**

The playing field remains a priority to ensure that it is maintained and developed in ways which will protect it as a valued amenity well into the future. As reported last year, there have been two significant projects underway...one is concerned with the review and development of the play equipment, the other was dealing with the creation of a Community/Memorial Garden. Bearing in mind the importance of the playing field to our community, and as reported last year, we created a Playing Field Advisory Committee (PFAC) to oversee these projects under the authority of Council.

This Committee provided an opportunity for us to appoint two non-Councillors to its membership, namely, Natalija Stevens and Clare Cowan. We are indebted to them both for their inputs to the playing field projects.

Here is a resume of where we are with the playing field projects:

### **a. Play equipment renewal.**

The planning, consultation exercise and fund raising effort are about to produce tangible results and a pre-installation site meeting was held with HAGS-SMP, the suppliers, on 28 April 2015. The start date for the project is 5 May 2015. So expect to see lots of activity from this date. There will, of course, be some inconvenience associated with these works but I am sure you will understand.

In addition to the installation of new items, the work will include the refurbishment of some of the old equipment. We are grateful for the generosity of those individuals and local businesses who contributed to the funding of the project.

We are considering the opening date for the 'new' play equipment and you will be informed of this.

My thanks to Nigel Frankland and all members of PFAC for the effort that has been put into this project.

### **b. Memorial Garden.**

This project was also preceded by a consultation exercise and you indicated that you would support the creation of a Community Garden and that it could incorporate a memorial element to remember those who served in the Great War.

The opening of the Garden was marked by a memorable event on 28 September 2014. The Gislingham Silver Band provided a great musical backdrop. The Friends of Burston School provided excellent refreshments...but the centre piece of the event was the opening by Major Jones of the Royal Anglian Regiment.

The Parish Council is grateful to all those who made the event such a success.

Special thanks to Tom Grieve who planned and oversaw the event.

**c. BMX Track**

During the preparations for the opening of the Memorial Garden, the opportunity was taken to carry-out some maintenance work on the BMX track. It's good to see an increase in its use by our young people.

**8. HIGHWAYS.**

The winter period and the passage of HGVs, has produced considerable damage to our highways, including verges, and Council is in constant touch with NCC Highways to arrange repairs. This year the problem was exacerbated by the need to divert traffic along Diss Road while major works were carried-out in Shimpling. I am assured by NCC Highways that the damage will be made good.

The Highways Liaison Group, which includes representatives from NCC Highways and ForFarmers (BOCM PAULS) met throughout the year to address highways issues, and this Group continues to be successful in delivering solutions to problems...and attracting NCC Highways funding for our local maintenance works. This year, an additional allocation of £140,000 has been injected into our local needs and we are led to believe that our focus on highways issues has influenced this.

I chair this Group and my fellow Member Nigel Frankland also attends. Tom Grieve is also part of the Council Highways Team.

**9. PROPOSED CHANGES TO FORFARMERS (BOCM PAULS) OPERATING ARRANGEMENTS**

Some of the issues discussed at meetings of the Highways Liaison Group (see paragraph 8) were centred on the problems caused by the movement of HGVs to and from the ForFarmers mill. These were chiefly associated with noise, damage to the road surface and verges, and speeding. To address these issues, the management at ForFarmers are proposing to conduct a trial of modified operating conditions and an upgrade to their vehicles to meet tougher EU Standards.

They propose to trial an earlier starting time which would allow outgoing ForFarmers vehicles to leave site from 6am. This will ensure all delivery vehicles are clear of the road through Burston and Shimpling (C205) and onto the A140 before incoming raw material vehicles are allowed onto site at 7am.

The purpose of the exercise is to reduce the number of times it is necessary for HGV's to pass each other which results in a consequent damage to the roadways and verges along Mill Road and the C205.

They propose to commence the trial from 1 June 2015 for one month so that they can monitor and review the impact on the neighbouring community. This will also allow time for communications following on from the briefing of immediate neighbours and Parish consultation prior to commencement.

The control measures that will be in place to ensure that the impacts on the surrounding community are kept to a minimum, are as follows:

- a) Only outgoing delivery vehicles will be able to leave at 6am whilst incoming raw material deliveries will remain at 7am.
- b) The weighbridge gate will continue to be locked shut until 7am preventing raw material vehicles from being able to enter onto site.
- c) Outgoing delivery vehicles are all less than 4 years old, routinely maintained and will leave site fully loaded, all of which will contribute to reducing noise emissions.
- d) A 20mph speed limit will be imposed whilst travelling through the Parish up to the A140.

- e) A tracking system is fitted to all delivery vehicles with continuous compliance monitoring being carried out for speed infringements.
- f) No vehicle loading will be carried out before 7am as per current NMP (Noise Management Plan) Version 5.
- g) Vehicle leaving times will be staggered to reduce the impact on the surrounding community.
- h) Regular monitoring will be carried out to ensure compliance and any issues will continue to be discussed with the Parish via the Highways Liaison Group.
- i) The current fleet includes 1 vehicle of Euro 6 specification with the replacement of the rest of the fleet due to commence during quarter 4 2015.
- j) Benefits of the Euro 6 specification include:
  - Lowest emission's in vehicle class.
  - Reduction in engine noise.
  - All will run on road friendly suspension (Air) with raisable mid axles that reduce road noise when running empty (i.e. returning to mill)

Council has agreed that this trial should proceed and you are invited to feed your comments back as the trial progresses. You can do this either direct to the Parish Clerk, to any Councillor or at a Parish Council Meeting.

We plan to inform everyone in the Parish via Cock Crow, Parish News, our website and the Parish Planet.

## **10. PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY (PROW)**

Countryside public rights-of-way are one of those aspects of the rural existence that we both enjoy and take for granted, and to ensure that they remain in a usable state demands hard work, vigilance and the co-operation of the end users and local landowners.

The web based tool I reported last year continues to be used and an ongoing planning matrix helps us to keep track (sorry about the pun!) where the issues are and what needs to be done.

We continue to have a good relationship with our local land owners which are so essential in both maintenance activities and keeping footpaths open.

My colleague Christine Stevens heads-up our PROW team and she is joined by Tom Grieve.

## **11. PARISH PLANET AND WEBSITE**

We continue to be proud of our Parish Magazine – Parish Planet. We still have some way to go however, in making this publication truly representative of your views and opinions, and to include more newsworthy items from a wider cross-section of the readership across the Parish.

So I repeat my request from last year...do please get involved with this great publication and make it yours by submitting articles to the sub editor, Christine Stevens.

The other way in which we try to establish communications with the community is via our Parish Council website. This site is currently under review and we plan to include a 'parish diary' page which will enable you to see what's going on in the Parish, or if you organise events, to publicise them.

Alison Wakeham is responsible for the site and she would welcome your contributions and ideas on how the site can be improved.

## **12. RECYCLING AREA (BOTTLE, CLOTHING AND BOOK BANK)**

This area provides a valuable amenity for the community, and an income which we use to fund other local improvements, but sadly abuse of the facility continues. As I write, and following an inspection, there is a considerable quantity of general domestic waste piled against the bank containers. May I urge everyone to respect this site and report any misuse to our Parish Clerk or to any Parish Councillor.

Council is able to take an income from the bottle bank which makes the reduction in its use over recent months a concern. If the income drops below a certain threshold then the bottle bank may not be a viable facility and we will have to consider closing it down. If you value this facility then I urge you to use it.

## **13. WELCOME TO OUR NEW VILLAGE CARETAKER**

Following an interview process, Council has appointed Jamie Churchard as our new Village Caretaker. We welcome Jamie to the Council team and look forward to the positive impact he will make on our local environment.

My thanks to Jim Howard for all that he did during his time as caretaker.

## **14. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I decided not to stand for re-election this year and so this is my last Parish Meeting with my last Council Meeting being our AGM on 18 May. It has been a privilege to serve this community as a Member of Council since 1993, 20 of those 22 years as your Chairman.

Our AGM will also mark the end of the current four year term of office for my colleagues, but I am pleased to say that, apart from me, all the other members of Council are remaining in office.

And so at this important milestone, I would like to express my personal thanks, and the thanks of my fellow Councillors to all those individuals and agencies that have supported our work, including:

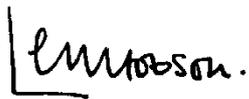
- Lee Peters and Ketill Lord, and the other members of the ForFarmers (BOCM PAULS) team.
- Our local landowners, and in particular Sir Rupert Mann
- Our linked County Councillor and District Councillor, Bev Spratt and Keith Weeks respectively.
- The other Officers and Members of Norfolk County Council and South Norfolk Council, with particular thanks to Gary Overland (NCC Highways).
- John Atkinson the editor of the Parish Planet and our Tree Warden.
- St Mary's Parochial Church Council.
- The Friends of Burston Church.
- Burston Chapel.
- Our village caretakers, past and present, Neil Francis, Peter Dade and Jim Howard.
- The Burston Crown.
- Burston House Hospital.
- My Deputy Emergency Coordinator, Andrew Grimley.
- The Community Action Team.

.....and all those kind individuals who do good works across our community for neighbours and friends.

## Burston and Shimpling Parish Council

I commend to you our Parish Clerk, Ann Baker, and the current members of Council, Alison Wakeham, Christine Stevens, Nigel Frankland and Tom Grieve. It's a great team that has as its sole motivation 'service to the community'. As we enter a new Council term I feel sure that you will continue to give them your support ...perhaps by putting yourself forward to be a co-opted member.

It has been a privilege to have served as a Member of Council over these years, and as its Chairman, to have worked with so many great people both past and present. I am grateful to them all for their friendship, support and guidance...but above all for enabling us as a team to make things happen.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "L. Morrison". The signature is written in a cursive style with a vertical line to the left of the first few letters.

Chairman

30 April 2015