



BURSTON AND SHIMPLING PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman's Report 2016-17

THIS year has been a year of quiet progress. 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.

We started the year having set a new budget, and at our meetings we have considered many planning applications for developments within the parish. We have liaised with representatives of the Norfolk Highways department, and our meetings have led to various improvements and repairs which otherwise might not have been done. 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.

During the year we have maintained the playing field, having the grass cut by contractors, having the equipment inspected on a weekly basis to spot any safety issues before they become serious, and having a RoSPA inspector carry out an annual inspection. We have maintained the churchyard in Shimpling, and contributed to the maintenance of the churchyard in Burston. We have trimmed hedges – some for the first time in several years, and we have maintained little parcels of land that would otherwise not receive attention.

The 'assets' of the villages have received attention. All of the benches have been repaired where necessary, and painted. The 'shed' has eventually been removed, and the site has been tidied.

The clothes bank and bottle banks have been removed – the income from the bottle bank was falling below the cost of running it. Rubbish has been removed from the bottle bank site regularly as some residents seemed to think it was a communal tip.

We have organised a Royal Tea Party to mark the Queen's 90th Birthday, which was attended by many residents. We have organised the Don Swanton Award which will be presented this evening.

Councillors have been involved in preliminary meetings regarding a Neighbourhood Plan for Diss and the surrounding parishes, and also regarding the Governance Review being carried out by South Norfolk Council.

All of this does not happen on its own, and I am very grateful to all who have helped in any way.

I must thank Ann Baker, our Clerk, for all the work that she does of an administrative nature. Ann has been busy learning all about the finances of the Council, which have been complicated this year by a change of Bank, as well as dealing with correspondence, and the agendas and minutes of our meetings. My thanks also to Alison Wakeham who has worked steadily through the year in spite of facing personal difficulties. She is an excellent and very supportive Vice-Chair, and does a lot of work on planning, and on the IT side of the Parish. Christine Stevens does work that is very much appreciated in connection with footpaths, and has expanded the role of Editor of our excellent quarterly publication 'The Planet' to include the role of production manager. Tom Grieve also deserves special thanks for all his work on 'events' and on the Don Swanton Award. Piers and Lindsey Bilston have been very supportive members of Council, and have made valuable contributions in many areas.

During the year Clare Cowan had to stand down, and we thank her for her service. We were able to co-opt Jim Rudd onto the Council, and he is proving to be a very useful councillor, helping in many ways. His knowledge of civil engineering is coming in very useful in our dealings with Highways, and will be invaluable when we come to drain the BMX track.

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. For Farmers contribute behind the scenes to many village events, and also pay for Church Green to be mowed, and also arrange for The Planet to be printed. Sir Rupert Mann helps in many ways, and is always willing to co-operate. He generously provided the land for the bottle banks, and also arranged a significant height reduction of the Shimpling Church hedge. Many residents 'do their bit'. Michael Saunders cuts the grass in front of the school. John Poole has mended several benches, and clears the molehills in the park. Andy Downes tidies the area around the seat at the end of Gissing Road, and helps clear the bottle bank site. Jim Howard and Ray McEniff came and helped with a bonfire on Church Green. Johnathan Gowing keeps the area by the Shimpling telephone box tidy. Too many people to mention helped with The Queen's Birthday. Jamie Churchard works hard as our village caretaker – trimming the grass in the play equipment area, and carrying out the important weekly safety checks on the play equipment itself, as well as keeping other areas tidy. Stuart Dobson found a source of many many bottles, (half a pub-full) which helped us make a profit on the bottle-bank. Many other people help in a myriad of ways and we are grateful to all of them.

And as we move into the next year, we will keep up all of the 'regular tasks' as well as playing a leading role in the Neighbourhood Plan and the Governance Review. We will also make further progress on 'the assets' – hopefully repainting the Burston Sign and the small shed, and also registering the playing field with Land Registry.

Nigel Frankland

Chairman