



BURSTON AND SHIMPLING PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman's Report 2019-2020

THIS year has seen Burston and Shimpling move from being a community with, for its size, a lot of things going on...in the Church, in the Chapel and in the pub... to a ghost-town situation, with everyone in lock-down due to the Covid-19 virus.

In May 2019 the Council came to the end of its four-year term. At that time Lindsey Bilston and Jim Rudd stood down as Councillors. My thanks to them for all the work that they put in while they were in office.

The Council moved into its new four year term with Ann Baker as the Clerk. Ann does a tremendous job organising Council meetings, writing the minutes, and provides all the necessary administration and 'back-office' services for the council.

At the first meeting of the Council I was elected as Chair for the current year, and Alison Wakeham was elected as the Vice-chair. Alison is the Responsible Financial Officer, our 'lead' on planning, and maintains the website. There are four other councillors, and one vacancy. Christine Stevens is responsible for footpaths, and edits and produces our quarterly full colour magazine 'The Planet', and is in charge of liaison with Burston House. Keith Cowley is responsible for the playing field and community orchard, and the SAM camera. Isobel Pugh is handling the Don Swanton Award and the application for grant aid for a defibrillator for Shimpling. Angela Belgrove is responsible for safeguarding and liaison with the school, and is our litter-pick organiser. Lindsey Bilston is still acting as our Tree Warden. Jim Rudd still deals with highway matters, organising regular meetings with a member of Norfolk County Council Highways team, and also organises the local Speed Watch team, submitting reports to the constabulary after each Speed Watch session. Mike Warwick is now our Emergency Co-ordinator.

Without all of these people doing what they do, the Parish Council would not function, so may I express my personal thanks to them all for all being members of a very effective team.

Throughout the year the Council has provided the necessary services to maintain our villages. 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. This has been achieved 'within budget', and, despite that fact that Parish Councils no longer receive any support from South Norfolk Council, for the coming year we have managed to prepare a budget that only increases the tax on a Band D house by £1 per year.

During our meetings this year we have considered many planning applications for building works within the parish. We have liaised with representatives of the Norfolk Highways department, and our meetings with them have led to various improvements and repairs which otherwise might not have been done. The Speed Watch team has been on the roads of one of our villages most weeks of the year up until the Covid-19 lockdown in March, apart from a break over Christmas. The SAM camera that we share with the Parish of Tivetshall has been in the Parish every alternate month.

This camera indicates to motorists how fast they are travelling, and has the effect of slowing down speeders. The camera also records how many vehicles it detects, and the speed of each one, as well as the time of day. This information is passed to the Police who use it to send traffic officers to set up speed traps at times of day when the data shows speeders are coming through our villages. 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.

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. A fence has been erected around the play equipment. The people who use the BMX track have carried out extensive works over the year, significantly improving the track and the quality of the jumps. We have maintained the churchyard in Shimpling, and contributed to the maintenance of the churchyard in Burston. We have trimmed hedges, organised a litter-pick, and liaised closely with the Unite Union regarding The Rally. We organised the Don Swanton Award which was awarded at the Annual Parish Meeting.

During the year Jamie Churchard, the village caretaker, tendered his resignation. He has been replaced by Hadleigh Drake. We thank Jamie for his work.

Councillors have been involved in on-going meetings regarding a Neighbourhood Plan for Diss and the surrounding parishes, and also the Greater Norwich Development Plan.

We are assisting, where possible, in the establishment of a high speed broadband network. We have provided financial support to village youth groups.

A continuing challenge has been Back Lane, Shimpling, where Norfolk County Council said they would have to take the bollards away. Last year we managed to persuade NCC to apply for a Traffic Regulation Order, to keep the track closed to motorised traffic. The proposed order was advertised, but protests were received. It has taken Norfolk County Council a year to decide that they would re-advertise for a closure order that would stop motor cars but allow motorcycles. The new order was ready to be advertised, but the Covid-19 lockdown intervened, and matters will not proceed until some sense of normality is restored.

We have repaired some of the benches in the Parish, and the restoration and repainting of the Burston Village Sign has been completed.

In the Autumn of 2019 a team of three residents, who formed a working party of the Parish Council, were able to secure funding to pay the total cost of building a War Memorial to be built on Church Green in Burston. The memorial was designed by Cyril Bromley, a retired architect, and built by Tommy Bloomfield, with help from Alan Page. The engraved stone arrived on the afternoon of the Friday before Remembrance Sunday, and was put in place on the brick plinth as twilight and rain fell with equal speed, so that the Memorial could be used for the Remembrance Day Service. Over 40 residents were on Church Green at 8 a.m. to hear the names of those Burston men who fell in the Great War read aloud. The memorial includes a stainless steel cupboard made by an apprentice at Waveney Pumps, thanks to Stuart Dobson. The cupboard contains a book, researched and written by Peter Rees, giving details of those who fell. It is intended that the book will be expanded to give some details of those who served and returned.

The Community Action Team assisted with the St. George's Day Service in April and the Candle-lit Carols in December in the Church of St. George in Shimpling, cleaning the church, providing the candle holders and candles, organising the readers and the organist, and dealing with the Churches Conservation Trust who maintain this Grade 1* listed, but redundant, church

In March 2020 the Emergency Plan was activated, under the emergency co-ordinator Mike Warwick, as the Parish went into lockdown. The Parish was leafletted explaining that volunteers were needed, and that those in isolation would be helped with shopping, collecting prescriptions, etc. Mike has paired up volunteers with those in need, and it is pleasing to be able to report that, as at the end of March, there are more volunteers than there are people saying that they need help. Our thanks go to Mike, and to all of those who volunteered.

All of this does not happen on its own, and I am very grateful to all who have helped in any way. 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 village events, and also pay for Church Green to be mowed, as well as arranging for our full colour quarterly Parish magazine, The Planet, to be printed, and this year provided the fencing materials to make the fence around the War Memorial. Tommy Bloomfield, assisted by Alan Page, worked very hard to get the War Memorial built. Sir Rupert Mann helps in many ways, and is always willing to co-operate. Hadleigh Drake has been working hard as our village caretaker. Many other villagers 'do their bit' to help keep our Parish a pleasant place to live, and my thanks go to them all.

Nigel Frankland (Chairman)