

## CRINGLEFORD PARISH COUNCIL

### ANNUAL REPORT, 2015-2016

The elections in May 2015 initiated a serious turnover in Parish Councillors. Geoff Champion and Gerry Mole decided not to stand for election. Annette Howlett and Chris Hopper resigned during the year. The chairman, Kevin Hogan, and his deputy, Tony Chater, resigned soon after the election. All the departing councillors made important contributions to the work of the Parish Council and to the life of the community and we are grateful. New councillors were co-opted through the year, but the team is relatively inexperienced in the ways of local government. There are still two vacancies, so if you are interested in serving the community as a parish councillor please contact the Clerk, Sonya Blythe.

The year started with a new, experienced clerk, Heidi Frary, in charge; I became the new Chairman in July. Heidi introduced a written Clerk's Report to the council meeting agenda as a means of keeping up to date with business. The Parish Council launched an ambitious review of its activities. It included the letting of the Pavilion and of space in The Willow Centre, as well as the use of the playing fields at Oakfields Road. Charges have been reviewed against the costs of the maintenance and office work needed. Relating staff and equipment to need is important. The Council's policies, some statutory, have been examined and up-dated and re-written where necessary. Revised standing orders have been adopted. The consequences of the review are beginning to show in more efficient administration and better services to parishioners. Much depends upon the staff. After making a significant contribution to our work, Monica Howard left in the summer to take on a new job at the school. Heidi Frary decided she must put family first and also left the Council's employ. We are grateful to both of them. The Council was fortunate to recruit Sonya Blythe as the new clerk. She started in November 2015. Andrew Harrison joined her in February as the Administration and Marketing Coordinator.

Planning issues continued to take up a lot of councillors' time. However, the decision to convert the Environment and Planning Group into a committee means that it can comment directly to South Norfolk (the planning authority) on applications for small-scale developments, such as housing extensions and conservatories. Valuable time is saved at Council meetings. Applications for larger scale developments and those of a sensitive nature still require full Council approval. An update on major planning applications will appear in the next edition of *Cringleford and Colney Life*. Planning issues often relate to more than just our parish so the Parish Council is hoping to build an alliance with our neighbours.

I had hoped to be able to report progress on the issues of car parking in Round House Park and on Colney Lane; unfortunately there has been virtually no action. We simply do not know whether the schemes for yellow lining will go ahead. However, in an apparently unrelated move, the legal department of the County Council has told us that a 20 mph limit will be introduced on Dragonfly Lane and Brambling Lane. There is no news about the crossing on the A11 or modifications to Eaton Street and Newmarket Road.

Trees have been a major concern during the year, partly because of a survey which the Parish Council commissioned, but partly also because of safety concerns raised by parishioners. Remedial work and sometimes removal is taking place. As is now well known, the state of the beech tree on the village green is such that it poses a safety risk and the Parish Council has decided - with great regret – that it must come down. It will be replaced.

Granting the junior football club exclusive use of the pitches at Oakfileds Road has been a great success for them and for the Council. The hope was that senior teams would be able to play on the new pitch at The Willow Centre but this proved impossible. At the time of writing, the Council still does not own the land. It also not clear whether the pitch is playable. New terms have been agreed with Cringleford Cricket Club and we hope they have a good season. Leases to the Scouts and the tennis club have been renewed. The Council recognises that the clubs and the Scouts share common concerns about the facilities at Oakfields Road and is keen that they should form a users' group to discuss these with the Council.

Further changes in the management of the parish can be expected as we move into a new year. The review of our facilities and working practices goes on. The scale and complexity of our activities will increase. There will be challenges, but with improved understanding of what we seek to do, with enthusiastic staff and - very important – with the good will and support of parishioners we will be able to provide an improved level of service worthy of Cringleford.

Malcolm Wagstaff  
3 May 2016