

CRINGLEFORD PARISH COUNCIL

REPORT to the ANNUAL PARISH MEETING for the year 2021-22

The Annual Parish Meeting is part of the process of local accountability. It offers an opportunity for Parishioners to raise matters of concern with the Parish Council. This meeting is not to be confused with the Annual Parish Council Meeting which follows immediately thereafter. The meeting receives annual reports from the Chair of the Parish Council, St Peter's Church, Cringleford CE VA Primary School and both Norfolk County and South Norfolk District Councillors. Since my report last May, we have had two resignations and welcomed two new co-opted councillors to our Council. Consequently, we have retained our full complement of eleven councillors.

Your Parish Council has several committees (with decision-making powers) and a series of advisory working groups. Council meetings and the Planning and Environment Committee meetings are held in public, and you are welcome to attend. The Parish Meeting was held virtually last year. A summary of the activities of our committees and groups over the year is presented in this report.

Committees

Full Council

This committee meets monthly except in August and receives reports and recommendations from its other committees and working groups, plus those from District and County Councillors and the Police. We met virtually last year under Covid-19 regulations, but with the authority to make decisions under these circumstances ceasing in June following the end of the temporary legislation, we returned to 'in person' meetings. With the incidence of Covid-19 rapidly increasing at the end of 2021, however, and with a committee containing some vulnerable councillors, Council took the decision to hold informal discussions virtually and meet when decisions were required e.g., for the budget to be set. With this meeting, we will return to 'in person' meetings for the foreseeable future but will remain socially distanced. Digital meetings have worked well and proved very useful and popular with both councillors and public. Consequently, we have joined with other parishes and organisations to lobby Government for a permanent change in law to provide us with the flexibility to decide how we hold our meetings. The Government is currently collecting evidence to determine whether to change the law.

Like many Councils and Local Authorities, we faced a dilemma over our gas supplier, Gazprom, this year. Our contract does not permit us to end it prematurely. However, it comes to end next year, and we have resolved not to continue using this company even though it may increase our energy costs.

The long-awaited parking schemes (discussions were initiated in 2018) for the Colney Lane and Intwood Road areas were formally agreed by Norfolk County Council Cabinet early this year and it has been confirmed recently that work will start this summer to put them in place. This will be a relief to many residents as the usual pre- pandemic parking issues have returned now.

This year we will be celebrating the Queen's Platinum Jubilee by planting trees around the Parish and laying out a tranquil garden on Roundhouse Park (for which we have obtained a grant). We will also be financially supporting several other Cringleford groups who are staging activities and events across the Parish.

Planning and Environment Committee (PEC)

This committee meets monthly and is the statutory consultative body for considering matters of planning and development in the Parish. We submit official Council comments on planning applications via our Clerk. Over the last year, we considered more than 60 planning applications and defended our objections to several of them at South Norfolk's Development Management Committee. PEC continues to hold regular meetings to work with the developers so we can provide the best possible outcomes for the Parish. This year new developers took over part of the Newfound Farm site to accelerate delivery of dwellings there and we requested a few minor changes to their plans. We also held meetings with the Local Authority to discuss the new primary school on the same site. The school is expected to be opened in 2024.

Last year, I reported that the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) was proposing around 400 additional homes for Cringleford and Council resolved to oppose the increase as this is 500 more than the number agreed in the Cringleford Neighbourhood Development Plan (1200). PEC raised written objections to these additional dwellings as we felt they were not necessary and alternative brownfield sites were available in Norwich, especially following the loss of many retail outlets over the last few years. Consequently, in February and March of this year, members of PEC attended the Examination Hearings for the GNLP to put forward their case. We currently await the report from the Planning Inspectors who presided at the hearings.

This committee continues to ensure that all the new estates have suitable road and footpath lighting. We took the decision to replace all our remaining old lamps and replace them with LEDs to save on electricity and maintenance costs.

From the start of 2022, PEC took on responsibility for the next stage – obtaining planning permission – in the development of our sport and recreation facility on St Giles Park. Drawings have been finalized and costings are in progress. We hope to submit our planning application jointly with Big Sky in the next couple of months. If successful and the facility is affordable, we hope to begin the build later this year.

Personnel Committee (PC)

This committee deals with a number of confidential staff matters (hence will not be reported on here), including appointments, and met twice over the year. During this time there have been three new appointments or changes from part- to full-time (including bringing our cleaning in-house creating a new position), and one resignation. We currently employ nine staff.

Advisory Groups

Recreation and Amenities Advisory Group (RAAG)

Initial work on our sport and recreation facility at St Giles Park has been completed by RAAG with help from a consultancy and plans have been drawn up to be carried forward by PEC. The facility, if affordable, will have an office, kitchen, changing rooms, a multi-purpose hall

equivalent to two badminton courts in size, and an attached nursery which we have developed in collaboration with a local provider. It will be an energy-efficient, future-proofed building with, hopefully, adjacent EV car chargers.

In April, we held a consultation on the future of our green spaces that have been or will be shortly handed over from developers. Thank you to everyone who attended to give us their feedback on the proposals and to provide some new ideas. Green space on the new developments consists mainly of children and young adult play areas except on St Giles Park where there is considerably more space available. Most of this area will be laid down to formal pitches as agreed under the planning permission, but we are hoping to put in place more paths for walking and cycling and facilities for more formal activities such as a pump track or skate park. Some space, however, on St Giles Park has been lost to the Thickthorn Interchange improvements due to start next year.

We reached agreement with the tennis club after several years of discussion on access by non-member parishioners to their tennis courts. This has been part of the contract with the club for many years but has been problematic to put in place. Access can be obtained through Cringleford Tennis' website, or via ours – just search for 'Tennis'.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Group

The CIL Group met twice to discuss a number of projects across the Parish, most notably the new Sport and Recreation facility on St Giles Park and the potential purchase of additional open space in the Parish. These two items should come to fruition in the next year and will form the most significant Parish expenditure since the construction of The Willow Centre. The group also determined the project priorities for the coming year to recommend to Council.

Finance Advisory Group (FAG)

The Council receives income from the precept, CIL, commuted sums (allocated to specific developments for maintenance) and grants. This group works diligently to oversee our expenditure and financial compliance, ensuring robust processes are in place, including audits, and makes recommendations to council on investments. It presented a draft annual budget to Council in December and recommended that there should be no increase in precept given our current financial status. This year they also reorganized the way in which we underpin the maintenance of our equipment and facilities.

Road Safety Group (RSG)

This group was established as a 'task and finish' group to look at ways to improve road safety by developing a strategy for the Parish. Cringleford's Road Safety Strategy was published in December 2021 on our website and circulated to the County Council's Councillors and Officers for feedback. The regular meetings of the Group then ceased. However, several issues arose this year which were to be addressed as part of our Strategy and consequently the group met again in April this year.

We were successful in the Parish Partnership Scheme and will receive 50% of the costs of putting in gateway signs on Intwood Road as you enter the village to alert drivers to the speed limit – one proposed solution from the Strategy to speeding along that stretch of road.

The Strategy is a live document, and we ask all of you, our Parishioners, to let us know if you wish to see any additional items added to it. Your responses and those of the County

together with data from our SAM2 cameras that were received last summer will help us devise solutions to improve safety on the roads of our Parish.

Professor Trevor L Wang, May 2022