Chairman's Report for the Annual Parish Meeting 2021

COVID 19

COVID 19 has had a huge impact on our lives especially people living alone or shielding. Jean Savigar and her team did a fantastic job supporting residents and I would like to thank them for making such a big difference to people's lives especially during the first lockdown. We are now working to update the Parish Council's Emergency Plan to include future pandemics.

Planning

We have had a lot of planning applications this year, some straightforward, others not so, also the inconsistency of the views of West Suffolk Council's Conservation Officer relating to two applications on The Green.

Wildlife Working Group

We have increased the wildlife areas on the greens to 20% of the total area for a trial two year period. Wooden artwork has been displayed on the Greens and with a minimum spraying policy the group has volunteered to clear the weeds along the footpath next to the allotments and around the wooden posts on the greens.

Ditches and hedges

We still have a problem with ownership and responsibility of landowners to cut back hedges and trees or clear ditches and how to bring about any action.

School Safety Barrier

This has still not been resolved as Suffolk County Council will not replace the safety barrier. Our request for white lines along Crematorium Road has also not been actioned by Suffolk County Council.

Quiet Lanes Initiative

Mere Lane has been nominated as a Quiet Lane. The main purpose of Quiet Lanes is to offer a safer environment for non-motorised travellers and help to protect our rural environment. John Fairlie agreed to lead this project and we are hoping that our nomination will be included in the second wave of applications.

Allotments

Water usage was very high due to a very dry early summer last year. The Parish Council is looking to install five 1,000 litre tanks donated by Treatts in Bury St Edmunds and pipe work to reduce water usage. All the allotments are occupied.

Housing Needs Survey

The Parish Council was asked to carry out a Housing Needs Survey by West Suffolk Council and Community Action Suffolk. Having received queries from Risby residents in need of affordable housing and because of the number of Risby residents currently on the Homelink Housing Register, we decided to proceed with the survey. I would like to thank Ian and his team for sorting this all out and the volunteers who helped deliver them.

War Memorial

All the work on the war memorial has been completed. A two minute silence was organised by Chris Sutton on Remembrance Sunday and the names on the war memorial were read out after which a resident played the bagpipes which was much appreciated.

Council Property

Steve Smith inspects this for us and found that repairs were needed on the bus shelters. Ian Turner organised the repairs for which we thank him. I would also like to thank Stephen Spencer for making two noticeboards for the bus shelters.

Highways

Potholes never go away. The gullies along Crematorium Road have been dug out making a huge difference. Last year saw horrific flooding on the Green. It was discovered that tree roots had grown into a pipe partially blocking it. Highways cleared this and we also built a permanent gully into Lower Green to prevent houses from flooding.

Properties were also flooded in South St by water coming off the fields behind. We contacted the landowner who supplied sandbags and also dug an open gully which prevented further flooding. A group of volunteers also cleared the edges of the paths across the Greens. I would like to thank all those concerned.

Adult Gym equipment
The Parish Council has agreed to give funding towards this project.

Automatic Numberplate Recognition Cameras (ANPR)
The Parish Council has expressed an interest in ANPR cameras being deployed in the village to help tackle the problem of speeding. The Parish Council would like to thank David Letley and his team for taking responsibility for our Vehicle Activated Signs and for their work with Community Speedwatch.

Last but not least, a huge thank you to all the volunteers who help out in the village – those who cut the grass in different parts of the village, the litter pickers, the leaflet droppers, the bus shelter cleaners and all those who do unseen things which make our village the great place it is to live in.

I would like to give a huge thank you to Joanne who has steered, helped, encouraged and kept us on the straight and narrow through this very stressful year and Zoom meetings. I would also like to thank my fellow councillors for the 'Team Spirt' on the Parish Council and all their commitment, help and support.