**Brundall Parish Council**

**Annual Parish Meeting**

**19 April 2021**

**Report by the Chairman**

The past year, as we are all more than aware, has been unprecedented whether in our private or working lives and has brought a wide range of challenges for the Parish Council but particularly for our community. I continue to be amazed by the resilience and fortitude that local people demonstrate in responding to these challenges whether volunteering to help others through a structured scheme such as through Yare Valley Churches or Good Neighbours, or simply helping family or friends. It has also been beneficial that local businesses, working within COVID restrictions, have continued to support local residents and provide much needed supplies and services.

During extended periods of lockdown it has been encouraging to see that local residents have made good use of council facilities at the Countryside Park and Parish Allotments for their daily exercise and this emphasis even more the Council’s desire to improve further its recreational offer.

During periods of emergency, new ways of working often emerge, and the use of video conferencing facilities such as Zoom have enabled the Council to continue effectively with its business, including public participation, which has introduced a whole new concept and a new language, such as ‘*you are on mute…’*. Currently, legislation will not allow us to continue with remote meetings after May 7th but this may still change. Although it will be good to return to face-to-face meetings, it has to be done in a COVID safe way.

I am grateful to my fellow parish councillors, and our Parish Clerk, Sharon, and Deputy Clerk and RFO, Claudia, for the positive way they have embraced the new way of working and allowed us to continue to deliver over the past year – I know it has been challenging at times so I am particularly indebted.

At our council meetings we have continued to be supported by our County Councillor, Andrew Proctor, and during the unfortunate continuing extended absence of our two elected district councillors, supported by District Councillors Sue Prutton and Grant Nurden.

This year continued to see a focus on planning issues, specifically the application by QL for a housing scheme on Land East of the Memorial Hall. Although this was refused by Broadland Council, this was taken to appeal by the developer and allowed despite significant local opposition, including from this Council. I have no doubt that this further development will put additional strain on to our services locally including traffic volumes but despite our disappointment with this appeal decision, we do now know the outcome of this long running application. There is some recreational provision being provided under S106 by the developer and it is important that we work closely with Broadland and in collaboration with the Memorial Hall to secure the best recreational and wellbeing opportunities we can for local residents.

We do, however, note that the Greater Norwich Local Plan, now submitted to the Secretary of State setting out development options up to 2036 in the Greater Norwich Area does not include any further development in Brundall, other than infil, which, in my view, is only right and proper as the village has reached the point of saturation.

An ongoing topic of discussion on our agendas and through public participation is road safety. This is amplified due to the linear nature of the village and limited access to and from main roads. Whereas our safety concerns are rightly focused within the village, I have no doubt that the completion of approved housing developments in Brundall and Blofield, together with the extension of dualling on the A47 will further increase pressure on the A47 roundabout from Old Yarmouth Road and Cucumber Lane. I anticipate that this will become an even greater congested choke point than it is currently, leading to road safety concerns exiting on to the A47. Despite whatever computer modelling may have taken place to suggest there is sufficient capacity, local knowledge and experience clearly tells me that this will be a major issue over the next two or three years and we need to work closely with Blofield and Postwick with Witton Parish Councils to lobby Norfolk County Council and Highways England, possibly through including our MP, to respond positively to our genuine concerns.

Within the village itself, we have looked at schemes which are likely to improve road safety, appreciating that funding will always be an issue. Although the proposed scheme for double yellow lines at the top of Highfield Avenue was agreed to go forward nearly two years ago, subject to the required legal process, we are still waiting for this work to be completed. This is frustrating for what is surely a relatively simple scheme, during which time the main school entrance has been moved.

Through the Parish Partnership Scheme (part funded by the Parish and County), we have got agreement for Norfolk County Council to undertake a feasibility study for a zebra crossing in The Street near to The Dales and this is welcomed. However, I anticipate that road safety will continue to feature highly on our agenda going forward.

Substantial preparatory work has continued during the year in relation to the Sports Hub off Old Yarmouth Road, and I am anticipating that this will move from preparation to the development phase soon in the new fiscal year to provide much needed recreational facilities.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all my fellow parish councillors for their contributions during the year and particularly to those who lead the sub groups. We are also immensely grateful for the work undertaken by our Parish Clerk, Sharon and Deputy Clerk and RFO Claudia ensuring that we continue to deliver the best service we possibly can to our community.

I have no doubt that the forthcoming year will continue to be challenging, but we have some exciting projects to deliver which will require further focus and effort from everyone.

Thank you for your attention and stay safe

Kevin Wilkins

Chairman

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