

CLOPTON PARISH COUNCIL
CHAIRMAN'S REPORT
for the Year
2022 to 2023

Parish Council Meetings

Six regular meetings of the parish council were held during the year as scheduled plus two additional meetings to discuss planning applications.

I'm pleased to say that this year all parish council meetings were held in person at the village hall.

Changes

It is with great regret that after more years of service, than I can remember, Tony Fryatt a long-standing member of Clopton Parish Council and our East Suffolk Councillor for a similarly long period has retired.

I think you will join me in thanking Tony, for his long standing and significant support, to the area, this council and to the village.

I am sure I speak for all of us when I say his experience, help and guidance has been an enormous asset to the parish and will be sorely missed.

That said I would like to welcome Tony's replacement, our newly elected East Suffolk District Councillor Colin Hedgley / Dan Clery.

I am pleased to say that for the first time in many years following the recent elections, we have our full-compliment of Parish Councillors and we welcome Councillor Simon Ashard and Councillor Ian Tilley-Nunn to Clopton Parish Council.

We have of course welcomed our new Parish Clerk Dave Gooch, who has stepped forward into the breach and allowed his predecessor Kay Bye to finally retire after submitting her resignation over a year ago.

I think we can look forward to a long a fruitful relationship with Dave. Please be gentle with him as he finds his feet as this is probably the most stressful period a Parish Clerk has to endure.

At least I hope this is the most stressful. and it doesn't get any worse during the year.

Accounts

Total receipts for the year 2022 / 2023 amounted to £10,801.19, of which £4,750 came from the Precept. The rest is made up from bank interest, vat reclaim, the takings of the jubilee event which were then distributed to the selected charities. Our receipts were also boosted by a number of grants that we received over the year.

These grants were:

An East Suffolk Council enabling community's grant of £1,108.01, this was kindly approved by Councillor Tony Fryatt and was obtained to go towards the costs of the First Responders Kit. This money was paid to the supplier of that kit before the financial year end.

A grant from Suffolk County Council of £750, - this was kindly approved by Councillor Elaine Bryce and was provided as a grant to put towards the cost of the entertainment to celebrate the Coronation event in May 2023.

Thirdly an East Suffolk Council Community Partnership grant for road safety of £1100. This grant was approved as a contribution towards the costs of the signage that will be installed on the B1078 at Clopton corner. However, our Suffolk County Councillor has intimated that she may be in a position to fund the whole project, if this is the case, because of the nature of the grant, this grant will need to be returned to East Suffolk Council

On the expenditure side, the total gross expenditure for the 2022 /2023 financial year was higher than last year and amounted to £8,538.95. This however includes the distribution of the Jubilee takings to the three selected charities and the movement of the grant money for the first responder's kit.

General Reserves at 31 March 2023 were £5,825.26 and earmarked reserves were £1,615.95 making a total of £7441.21. These figures do not include the grant monies received last year that I previously mentioned, and that are awaiting distribution. Taking account of the grants received but not yet spent, the overall increase in reserves amounts to a rise of £412.24 over the year.

The annual accounts were submitted to the Internal Auditor, and I am pleased to tell you, a clean report was received.

We did increase our precept for the coming year 2023/2024, this is to budget for additional costs associated with running the parish council.

The precept for 2022-2023 has therefore been increased slightly to £5,550 for the year.

Planning Applications

Sixteen planning applications were received during the year, of which nine were permitted, three were refused, two were withdrawn and two are awaiting decisions.

Clopton Parish Council met, reviewed and made submissions on all but two of these.

We note that despite our submission to the Sizewell C enquiry, sighting our concerns over the implications on road safety within the village, the project is scheduled to go ahead.

Because of the proposed use of the B1078 as a feeder route for workers to the construction site. Clopton Parish Council's Concerns over road Safety during the Construction phase remain.

Events, Topics & Issues

Litter Pick:

I am pleased to report that we have managed to maintain the momentum from previous years and that a further two litter picks were carried out. One in October 2022 and just last month in April 2023.

Our thanks to go Councillor Gittoes for organising the event and all the volunteers who turned out so magnificently for the actual litter picking itself.

Despite the regularity of the event, it still surprises me the volume and variety of rubbish that is collected.

I must also thank all those who contributed to the after-event refreshments, which were very welcome.

Jubilee and Coronation Events:

I must pay tribute to the Events committee for their Stirling work, firstly with two amazing Jubilee events which were exceptionally well attended and provided great enjoyment to one and all.

This was reinforced by the Coronation event at the beginning of the month which was a brilliant event. Alas it was dampened somewhat by the weather, but of course so far at least, the events committee have not been able to take control of that.

We are very grateful to Councillor Elaine Bryce for her grant towards the entertainment and to Councillor Lye for her and her company "Home Instead" for their kind donation to the event.

I must also congratulate all the wonderful souls who baked coronation cakes and provided refreshments in the village hall.

People from outside the village regularly comment to me on the fact that, Clopton, despite being quite a small village, manages to stage superb events. So, congratulations one and all.

Our thanks also go to:

Debach Enterprises for the loan of the trailer for the stage;

Mike green for pulling the trailer out of the mud, after the event;

Wonkey Donkey and Midas productions for providing the Bar and power respectively;

Richard Taylor for Stirling Beacon construction and ignition of said beacon;

and not forgetting Councillor Pitt and her team who manned the barbeque in the pouring rain and kept us warm on the inside despite the wet and cold on the outside.

I will also briefly mention our intimate gathering to mark the passing of Queen Elizabeth II and to pledge allegiance to King Charles III. It was gratifying to see so many people making time to attend.

Village Infrastructure:

Village Sign

Just a very brief mention of the village sign which was finally in place for the Jubilee events. I am pleased to say it is still looking as good. I thanked most of those involved last year but I need to add Richard Taylor to the list as thanks to his skill with the Telehandler we were able to conclude the job on the morning of the first jubilee event.

Road Safety:

It is now just over two years since Clopton Parish Council produced a detailed report for submission to Suffolk County Council, which we believed made a strong case for a 40-mph speed limit to be introduced along the B1078 from Manor Road towards Drabbs Lane. As I have reported previously, we have been unsuccessful so far, in convincing SCC of the merit in our argument for a reduced speed limit.

However, they have recognised the dangers that do exist along this stretch of road, and the difficulties that local residents experience on a daily basis when they try to cross, turn on to, or walk alongside, the B1078.

I am pleased to say, thanks in no small part, to significant lobbying on our behalf by our County Councillor Elaine Bryce, the County Council has identified significant improvements that can be made to the existing signage, approaching and around the Shop Road, Manor Road, junctions. The County Council has prepared detailed plans, which are already out to tender and Elaine has agreed to fund the works, which we expect will be carried out later this year.

Village Hall

The Village Hall is owned by the Parish Council and is leased to the Village Hall Management Committee for maintenance and day to day running.

Having moved out of the village some years ago, I am gratified to frequently hear how well the Village Hall is regarded within the area.

Only the other day the brand-new Framlingham village hall was quite unfavourably compared to ours in Clopton and I pay tribute to all those who have contributed to that success.

Last year I spoke of the benefit of having improved liaison between the Village Hall Management committee and the Parish Council and I am pleased to report that, over the last year, we have taken steps to achieve this.

As you will no doubt hear later, the Village Hall management committee has identified various projects to further improve the hall facilities some of which will require significant expense and closer collaboration with the Parish Council to explore the required funding.

I also want to mention and thank the Village Hall management committee who relieve the Parish Council of a great deal of work on the running and upkeep of our village hall.

Finally:

The parish council once again offers heartfelt thanks to Della Hughes who continues to run the Clopton eNews, assists with the village website and manages the village hall bookings, all on a voluntary basis.

I would like to thank our County Councillor Elaine Bryce particularly for her stoic support of our bid for a speed limit on the B1078 and her wide-ranging efforts to improve road safety in the ward.

Every Parish Council that I have worked with over the year has commented on how tirelessly Elaine has worked.

I would like to reiterate our thanks to our retiring East Suffolk Councillor, Tony Fryatt. I really hope he enjoys a well-deserved rest.

I must not forget my fellow councillors for their efforts over the last year, particularly Julie for organising the litter picks and the Events committee, both Councillors and non-councillors, for organising our various Celebrations in the village.

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank all those supporting our village in other capacities. You all do sterling work and contribute greatly to making Clopton the splendid village that it is.

Finally on the recognition front. On behalf of the Parish Council, I would like to convey our heartfelt thanks to our newly retired Parish Clerk Kay who has kept things going on an even keel for so many years.

In conclusion, although there are some long standing issues that we are yet to bring to a satisfactory conclusion we are nearing the finish line. We have brought Clopton Parish Council finances to a comfortable state, and I am confident that Clopton Parish Council is in a good position to take village affairs forward.

Peter Raffell
Chairman

19th May 2023