

CLOPTON PARISH COUNCIL
CHAIRMAN'S REPORT
for the Year
2023 to 2024

Parish Council Meetings

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

All parish council meetings were held in person at the village hall.

Changes

There have been no changes to the Parish Council and we have retained our full complement of Councillors. However, Councillor Gittoes has decided to stand down and for the year ahead and we will be looking to co-opt a replacement councillor if anyone within the village would be interested in joining the parish council.

I would like to thank Julie for her contribution over the years and wish her well for the future, which now includes Secretary to the village hall Committee

Following last year's local elections, our DC's Hedgley and Clery agreed to split the responsibilities of attending PC Meetings, and as a result DC Clery has been responsible for attending Clopton PC meetings. This will continue until August 2024, then DC Hedgley will attend for the next 12 months (and so on until the next election). However, they have made it clear that the PC is free to consult with either DC at any time. Similarly, the PC can request one or both DCs to attend a particular meeting.

Accounts

Total receipts for the year 2023 / 2024 amounted to £6,149.90, of which £5,550 came from the Precept. The balance is made up from bank interest of £199.98, vat reclaim £114.92, and the balance from the Coronation event of £285.00.
Total Payments for the year amounted to £6,712.32.

This included a return of £1,100 to East Suffolk Council, which was a specific grant towards the potential cost of the B1078 road safety signage.

We are very grateful to our County Councillor, Elaine Bryce, who paid the total cost of the road safety work from her own budget.

In my report last year, I pointed out that, as the East Suffolk grant was specifically awarded to help the Parish Council with a contribution towards that road safety project, if it were not required, we were obliged to return this money.

After that refund is taken into account, our expenditure over the year, was £537.58 less than our income.

General Reserves at 31 March 2024 were £6,674.41 and earmarked reserves were £2,148.38 making a total of £8,822.79.

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 last year to budget for additional costs associated with running the parish council.

For the coming year, being sensitive to the various cost pressures that people are facing, and as we have held our overall spending slightly below our income for the year. We have decided to maintain our precept at 2023/2024 level.

The Parish Council Precept for 2024-2025 will therefore remain at £5,550 for the year.

Planning Applications

Sixteen planning applications were received during the year, of which eleven were permitted, and two are awaiting decisions.

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

Events, Topics & Issues

Potholes and Footpaths

Please keep reporting issues on the Suffolk County Council Website. This does help raise the profile of any problems faster than waiting for a Parish Council Meeting and is just as, if not more effective.

Events

During the year the Parish Council had discussed the possibility of organising a further social event for the village. This time to mark the 80th Anniversary of the D-Day landings.

Various options were considered, with the suggestion that it would be fitting to hold such an event at the old WW2 airfield.

However, after investigation of the logistics and potential costs involved in the project. Also giving due consideration to the fact that, over the last few years, the events team have put a great deal of effort into organising a series of very successful activities, it was felt that we should pause our major event Calendar for the time being and give the team a rest.

None the less, I would like to complement all the members of the team for their hard work and fortitude over the last few years.

Road Safety:

I am pleased to say finally, that after many a false dawn, the promised improved Road Safety signage around the Manor Road / Shop Road junctions with the B1078, have been completed.

I would like to reiterate our gratitude to County Councillor Elain Price for her tireless support for this project and for saving the Parish Council a significant sum by fully funding the work from her locality budget.

It is interesting to note that despite the above improvements, only a few weeks ago, there was a vehicle accident, immediately to the west of Manor Road and serious enough to close the road and be attended by the police.

Whilst fortunately not resulting in serious injury, this resulted in the destruction of a telegraph pole on one side of the B1078 and damage to a tree on the other side.

It may be worthwhile for the Parish Council to request details of the accident from Suffolk Police for evidence that might support any further attempts to improve road safety within the village.

As ever, given the expected increase in traffic levels from the proposed use of the B1078 as a feeder route for workers to the Sizewell C construction site. Road Safety remains a cause for concern, and Clopton Parish Council's fears over road Safety within the village remain.

The Parish Council is fully aware of the difficulties experienced by residents living along the B1078 at Otley Bottom and the nearby junctions with the B1079. We have always promised that once we had moved the shop road safety improvements to fruition, we would be able to give due attention to their concerns.

Given the lack of funding being experienced by our County Council at the moment it may be difficult to achieve any improvements in the short term, however the residents in this area do have legitimate concerns and the Parish Council should investigate any options that may help in this regard.

Village Hall

Over the last year the liaison between the Village Hall Management committee and the Parish Council has improved considerably. This has been helped in no small way by Councillor Gittoes stepping in to the role of Secretary for the Village Hall Committee and I would like to record our thanks to Councillor Gittoes for that work.

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 all the members of the Village Hall management committee who relieve the Parish Council of a great deal of work on the running and upkeep of this excellent asset.

Finally:

I would like to thank Our District Councillors, DC Colin Hedgley and DC Dan Clery and of course, our County Councillor, Elaine Price for their help and support to the Parish.

The parish council once again offers heartfelt thanks to our communications officer Della Hughes who continues to run the Clopton eNews, assists with the village website and until very recently, managed the village hall bookings, all on a voluntary basis.

After more years than I can remember, Della has finally been able to pass on the baton of Village Hall Booking Clerk.

Della has provided sterling service to our community and I would like to formally record our gratitude and heartfelt thanks for that.

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank all those supporting our village in other capacities. Including Councillor Bright for his help and efforts in setting up and running the "First Responders within the village". All of you contribute greatly to making Clopton the splendid village that it is.

Finally on the recognition front. I would like to convey my heartfelt thanks to Dave Gooch, our Parish Clerk, who has picked up the reins and over the year, despite my very best efforts, kept the Parish Council running as smoothly as ever.

As I am now standing down as Chairman:
on a very personal note, I would like to record my sincere appreciation for every single member of Clopton Parish Council.

I just want to say it has been a great pleasure to work with you all.
In your various ways you have contributed significantly to the life of this village, but for me personally, you have made my role as chairman so much easier and I thank you for your help and support over the years.

Thank you.

Peter Raffell
Chairman

28th May 2024