

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2017

Last year I reported that our focus was speeding and road safety, and concerns about parking and restricted roadways. The more parked vehicles there are however tends to have its effect on slowing down traffic, so there is some element of "things sorting themselves out" to achieve the desired effect. We are a stage further forward in getting the yellow lines extended at the Co-op, and have requested yellow lines around the busy junction of The Street and Garden House Lane. We are also arranging to get a speed activated sign in conjunction with Botesdale Parish Council – you will have seen the one in Redgrave, and they seem to be springing up in various villages. Three sites have been identified, in the centre of the villages and at either end, and the sign will be rotated between them.

There has been the usual busy activity on Planning this year, and the focus for 2017 is to establish a Neighbourhood Plan. This is a planning document which takes quite a time to produce – years rather than months – and involves questionnaires and consultations. The result is a guide to development planning and infrastructure accepted by Mid Suffolk District Council as the acceptable way forward for future house building. The plan is developed by Residents in conjunction with Rickinghall and Botesdale Parish Councils as a Community led group, with initial funding to set up agreed by the councils. We are deemed to be a Key Service Centre in the MSDC area and we will see development over the next few years to assist towards the national housing supply. The Neighbourhood Plan group is now formed, a steering committee is in place, and you will hear much more about this during the year.

The planning issue has become very focused in the last 12 months on the residents of Garden House Lane, which has become a magnet for planning applications. The aforementioned junction is already busy at peak times with vehicles exiting to go to work or school and I am sure residents thought the Ryders Way and Wheatfields developments were sufficient for the area. We are awaiting results of applications for developments on both sides of the lane at the top, for 10 and 43 houses, and one has already been built at the bottom. In addition, there is one recently approved on the corner, and there is a very recent application for a further four. Garden House Lane residents are fairly regular attendees at our meetings recently!

The planning side of our activities is perhaps the most interesting, but our representations to MSDC are not always agreed by the authority. We form just one opinion, and I would urge you to either write in or respond on line to applications that affect you.

Other activities include the arranging of street sweeping, footpath clearance and the maintenance of street lighting, litter bin and dog bin emptying and our annual litter pick. We make grants for churchyard maintenance. We arrange for the bottle bank area up Snape Hill to be cleared – why do people continue to dump fridges, furniture and rubbish up there? If you see this activity, please report it to a councillor or the clerk .

This time last year we were taking on responsibility for the local minibus scheme called RBGNS run by Gordon Lawrence. This is a volunteer-run service, previously administered by Suffolk County Council, and has transferred seamlessly, thanks to Gordon and his drivers.

We are fortunate in having local councillors who attend our monthly meetings – thanks to Jessica Fleming (Suffolk CC and MSDC) and Derek Osborne (MSDC) for their valued help and advice during the year. My thanks, as always, go to our clerk Leeann Jackson-Eve for her hard work in keeping us in order and legal during the year, and finally my grateful thanks to my fellow councillors – Gillian, Sally, Dominic, Rosemary and Robin – for their support.

If there is anything concerning you, do come to our meeting (first Thursday of the month at 7.30 pm in the Village Hall) where there is a public forum session, at which you are able to address the council.

Should you wish to consider joining us, we still have vacancies; please contact myself or Leeann for an informal chat.

Geoff Short
Chairman, Rickinghall Parish Council