

Chairman of Nacton Parish Council – report for 2020

I write this report at a time when the UK is in lock down, due to Covid virus and when, as a result, all our lives have been affected. Due to the restrictions imposed upon us, the Annual Parish Meeting for Nacton has been cancelled for this year and therefore this report will only be available on-line. All this is much regretted.

Parish Council meetings are not taking place, but parish councillors together with our clerk, continue to communicate and to maintain a presence.

In May 2019 there were contested parish council elections. The five sitting councillors who wished to be re-elected were successful (Brian Hunt, Jos Leeder, Paula Warner, Judith Wyndham and Ros Eaton) and they were joined by four new councillors - Cathy Newby, Ted Crampton, Christine Scott and Victoria Dangerfield).

At the AGM in May, Brian Hunt was re-elected as chairman and Paula Warner as deputy chairman. Since then, three of the newly elected councillors have resigned -TC, VD, CS and have been replaced by Steve Keys and Christine Adams. This means that we have one vacancy, which, because of election constraints due to the virus, will not be filled until next year.

All this information was intended to be included in a March newsletter, sadly cancelled.

During the last year a new defibrillator was fitted to the village hall. It requires a code to open the door which can be obtained by dialling 999 and stating where you are. The parish council is very grateful to our two new district councillors, Richard Kerry and Melissa Allen, and to our County Councillor, Patricia O'Brien, for providing the funds for this.

In 2019 Daniel Adams offered to be the new assistant tree warden. Since appointed he has with assistance, tidied up Pauper's Wood and placed a line of posts which indicate where the boundary of parish council land is. More will be undertaken later.

Priory Court is in the process of acquiring a new notice board to replace the current one which is in a poor state of repair. Again, we are grateful to Melissa Allen for providing most of the fund necessary for the purchase.

Victoria Field remains an area of discussion. Whilst the dog ban remains in place, the parish council decided that this was an opportunity to discuss the field and its use and improvement in the future. A provisional plan has been created, which will in due course be distributed to all houses. There will then be an open discussion on this at a future parish council meeting. However, it has already been agreed and the funding found to make one of the entrances to the field suitable for the disabled. In addition, another section of the hedge surrounding the field has been replaced and watered. Again, the parish council is very grateful to our Tree Warden, William Cook, for all the work he undertakes.

A newsletter was completed in the Autumn of 2019. The council is again grateful to Orwell Park School for allowing us to print copies for all households without charge.

Frustratingly, we have several things in the pipeline which cannot be moved forward due to the slow response from Suffolk Highways. This includes the positioning of three posts so that our speed sign can be put into action.

Also, flooding under the railway bridge remains a Highways problem, with limited progress. Highways have now agreed to clean the soakaways four times a year, rather than once. The farm has also located where the soakaway is and has cleared some of the pipework near Amberfield. In addition, a small group removed the silt from under the bridge. More remains to be undertaken before the problem is solved.

Our parish clerk, Sue Brown, has indicated that she wishes to resign by April 2021. She has been in position for around eight years and has worked very hard to keep councillors up to date, financially sound and legal. More will be said next time. We are now actively looking for a replacement, a task made more difficult by the present circumstances.

On what has now become a tradition, Commonwealth Day was celebrated in the playing fields with pupils from the two schools in the village and residents. Due to the cold weather, readings by the pupils took place inside the pavilion and the flag raising was brief. Again, I thank all those who helped organise this event.

The proposals for Sizewell C, including a possible Freight Management Area being built here, remain unclear. It is possible that the railways will take on more and therefore a FMA will not be necessary. There should be further news later this year.

Lastly, I wish to express my thanks to parish councillors for the work that they do and for their regular attendance both at the parish council meetings, but also at the numerous working party meetings that I call at various times during the year. These working parties include finance, newsletter, emergency plan, Victoria Field as well as one of gatherings.

Also, thanks should be made to Robert Warner for his work on numerous occasions, but in particular with cutting Victoria Field.

I very much hope that next year's report will be presented in the proper fashion, a report which will be my last as chairman, as I intend to stand down in May 2021 and to allow someone else with new ideas to take the lead.

Brian Hunt

Nacton PC Chairman

Next month there will be parish councils to select councillors for the next 4 years. Four of the current councillors have decided not to stand for re-election again. The four, Gillian Bence-Jones, Robert Giles, Andrew Slater and Malcolm Robson have given a great deal of their time over the last four years and in three cases, considerably longer than that, for the greater benefit of the parish of Nacton.

The remaining councillors, Jos Leeder, Paula Warner, Judith Wyndham, Ros Eaton are all seeking re-election in May. I am also grateful to all of them, especially to my deputy Paula.

Throughout the last year the Parish Council has been supported both with advice and with finances by our two local councillors, Patricia O'Brien and Nicky Yeo. I am particularly grateful to Nicky, who has continued to offer guidance, despite her terminal illness.

The council has been particularly concerned about the speed of traffic through the village. A new sign has been put up on the Levington road, and the council has acquired a VAS. (Vehicle Activated Sign.) We are now awaiting Suffolk Highways, who will put up posts on each of the roads into the village, to which the moveable sign can be attached.

A new sign is also anticipated on the road from the A14 towards Priory Park, which should make it easier for cars to move to the inside lane before turning left.

The council has appointed a solicitor to try and gain the parish council as owners of two pieces of land in the village. The parish council now has Paupers' Wood registered in its name. We are still awaiting news of Poores' Field.

In 2018, the parish council decided to ban all dogs from Victoria Field. This was because dog mess was left behind by their owners. As the Playgroup uses the field on a regular basis, the council felt that this was an appropriate action. Later in the year the village school sought permission to use the field whilst theirs was being reseeded. It has since become apparent that people in the village felt that this an incorrect decision and that the ban should be lifted. The parish council agreed that this matter should be discussed at the APM and that the new council should take note of what was said at their first meeting following the elections and either uphold or scrap the ban.

The Parish Council again produced a newsletter. As before, this was very much a team effort. The council is very grateful to Orwell Park, for allowing us to print copies for free. The newsletter was delivered to all households in Nacton and Priory Court at the beginning of April.

Following the Data Protection Act, permissions have been sought from anyone mentioned on the Nacton website or in any of the council documents. The Emergency Plan, Welcome to Nacton document, as well as the website will be updated later this year.

Later this month there will be a litter pick morning. It is hoped that both Priory Court and Nacton Village will be able to raise enough volunteers, not only to remove litter, but also to clean the two bus stops and to smarted up some of the road signs.

The Parish Council is acquiring a pot of money, which comes through the building of new properties. Whilst there are several ideas about the way to spend the money, villagers will be asked for their thoughts as well. Any suggestions should be forwarded to the Parish Clerk.

The village telephone has been smartened up. The outside has been painted and the inside refurbished. Whilst the signal for mobiles remains weak in Nacton, the public telephone box will remain in use. Once this situation changes, the Parish Council should be given the option of purchasing the box for a £1.

We continue to pursue the idea of purchasing a second defibrillator, which would be located at the pavilion, in the playing fields. Whilst the budget does not allow for a purchase in the immediate future, funds may well become available as the year progresses.

Victoria Field has had part of the hedge replaced. The plants were obtained through a charity and planted through the efforts of the Tree Warden, William Cook and Robert Giles. A piece of fence was also removed, which had sharp spikes at about a human chest height.

Commonwealth Day was celebrated again, with pupils from Orwell Park and Nacton School coming together to entertain those that attended with various readings. They then enjoyed raising the flag, which due to the strong wind, was on a shortened flagpole, and the Pop-up café tea. I am grateful to both schools for allowing this to happen.

Several major planning proposals have come our way this year, all of which could seriously affect travel to and from the village and Priory Park. In particular, Sizewell C proposals, with the possibility of a Freight Distribution Depot being built near here, is particularly concerning, as the number of lorries using it, is huge. A representative from Sizewell C gave a talk at the village hall and answered numerous questions from the audience. We will know more about their plans next year.

Several councillors, together with the parish clerk, visited the village school. The pupils who looked after us, were confident and as always seems the case, proud of their school. All enjoyed their school lunch, which completed a good visit.

Finally, some additional thanks. Firstly, to those who give time and effort for the benefit of the village, whether it be an organised event or something quietly undertaken. Lastly, my grateful thanks to the Parish Clerk, Sue Brown. She continues to attend numerous meetings for updates and to support the councillors at all their various and numerous meetings. The Parish Council remains financially sound and legally secure.

Brian Hunt

Chairman of Nacton Parish Council