

Chairman's report to Monk Soham Annual Parish Meeting. 4th. May 2021.

This past year has seen the greatest alteration to, and restriction on, everyday life since World War Two. Monk Soham has been affected in the same way as all other communities in the United Kingdom and across the world. All that has been entailed in trying to maintain a safe environment whilst dealing with the imposed isolation we have all endured has defined clearly the significance of being in a community, a term normally hard to fully define but now much more easily comprehended .

People have actively looked out for one another to check on well being both physical and mental. This has been most obviously demonstrated in the selfless example of Natalie and Mark Harding who for a whole year ensured that food and medical supplies were delivered to the village and then on to individual households. Their efforts were supplementing the efficient system organised in Bedfield and our thanks are also due to those volunteers who helped in any way to run this. Thanks also to Geoff Robinson, Parish Clerk to both Monk Soham and Bedfield ,who so ably dealt with the the large amount of legal and technical requirements which were needed to back up the community support systems operations. As we are now aware that life is inching back to some form of normality we will emerge with some of our perceptions permanently changed and will I hope be more conscious of those about us and their needs than ever before.

In the past year the Parish Council has continued to meet remotely and has maintained its proper quota of meetings. The only casualty being the 2020 Annual Parish Meeting which was a victim of early restrictions in the crisis.

Normal Parish Council business involved dealing with the issues of potholes, fly tipping and footpath maintenance. Footpaths have been under more scrutiny due to increased usage as a result of travel and exercise restrictions plus some less than careful farming practices by a very few which also saw problems created on both the village roads and verges. The Parish Council has ,through its Parish Clerk , an effective line of communications with the County Council which quite often helps to bring about a speedy resolution of a problem . We also try to maintain good contacts with local landowners and land users to help keep an attitude of mutual cooperation and understanding in existence.

A subject which generated a deal of debate during the year was wether to join in a scheme to identify and mark some roads in the village as Quiet Lanes. A number of parishioners were supportive of this but after careful consideration we did not join up to the process as it was felt that there would not be any real impact on how the roads were regarded or used. We also have a regular report from the Countryside Group who keep a knowledgable eye on our local environment and especially Hungers Green and it's management.

Thanks to Julie Giles who gives the Council a regular report on behalf of the Countryside Group and to Graham Giles who is now our Tree Warden and will keep an eye on the many trees on the Green.

A problem arose during the year regarding the placing of rope swings suspended from trees on Hungers Green which we have no option but to remove for legal and insurance reasons but knowing we could be regarded as killjoys.

Finally I would like to again thank our Parish Clerk , Geoff Robinson , for the sterling work he puts in on behalf of the Parish Council and our community. The volume of communications and the the legal and technical issues generated by them is , to me, quite staggering. His often behind the scenes activities which maintain the proper functioning of the Parish Council are considerable and always thorough and absolutely essential for the work it does.

David Entwisle. Chairman