

Annual Report by the Parish Council Chair

Tuesday 3rd May 2022

I am pleased to be able to give my first Annual Report. This time last year we were still limited by the pandemic however it's good to back enjoying face-to-face meetings in three dimensions instead of in two as we have emerged from Covid restrictions as the year progressed.

The Parish Council's main activity over the past twelve months seems to have involved a steady stream of planning applications from across the village. Abbey House, Monk Soham Hall, Hillside Cottage, the Long House, the land beside Post Office Cottage, the Oaks, Oak Cottages, Siva Kennels have all kept us occupied and opened up discussion about the direction that we want Monk Soham to take. We have been consistent in our view that the village needs to develop, adapt and evolve if we are to attract young families and to avoid the village becoming moribund as the population ages, while also taking seriously environmental issues that may have been impacted by applications. Our planning application meetings have become even more transparent and open, though there has been little active involvement by those living in Monk Soham apart from members of the parish council. Our view has been somewhat at odds with Mid Suffolk planners, who steadfastly refused applications for new builds on the grounds chiefly of lack of amenity, though lately there are signs that their stance may be softening a little as two applications for annexes have been approved, whereas a previous similar application was refused. We shall see.

Our Countryside Group has continued to do sterling work in particular looking after Hungers Green and thanks to everyone who has been involved in the group's work, planting bushes and trees as well as daffodil bulbs around the village sign, by the noticeboard and on Hungers Green; the group contributes significantly to helping maintain our village as such an attractive place to be. We are, however, currently without a Tree Warden following the stepping down of the previous warden. Unfortunately, clarification of insurance issues has proven to be tortuous as the underwriters have been painfully slow to respond to our inquiries. These issues have now been resolved and we can, I hope, soon fill our Tree Warden vacancy.

Other improvements to our local environment include to new bench by the village noticeboard. The whole site there looks much better and it is good to see the bench being well used.

On matters of finance, we end the year financially sound. The main issues have been around the decision of our bank to begin to charge a standing fee and a for cheques which are quite disproportionate to the sums involved and would, if we had continued, taken a significant amount from our modest annual income. Again, it has proven to be frustratingly complicated to find and switch to a new bank, however thanks to the dogged persistence of our Clerk, we are finally there. We hope.

Finally, my thanks to all my fellow parish councillors and to our excellent Clerk for giving your time and for all your work on behalf of Monk Soham village.

Graham Wigley
(Chairman)

