

Parish Chairman's Report for 2020/21 for the Annual Parish Meeting Tuesday May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021

The 2020 AGM was delayed due to Coronavirus a problem that has continued to dominate our lives. Almost all the Parish Council meetings have been conducted by zoom.

The AGM was held in the village hall on Thursday August 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

I am sorry to report the deaths of two residents Krista Boardman in September, who had moved away but along with her husband Bert played an important part in village life.

More recently we lost Don Marper who had been a former Parish Councillor and had been an integral part of Westhorpe for very many years.

At our meeting on Tuesday November 3<sup>rd</sup>, in the village hall we thanked Camilla Kennedy for all her efforts as Clerk to the Parish Council. Camilla had lived in Westhorpe for most of her life and her knowledge, commitment, and efforts as Parish Clerk have been much appreciated, we were able to present her with a book token signed by all the Councillors.

We are most grateful to Julia Dunncliffe for taking on the role as Parish Clerk the hand over took place at the November meeting, the task of a Parish Clerk becomes more complicated every year, although Westhorpe is modest in its turnover the practices must be audited and followed as if it were a bigger council. Thank you, Julia, for taking on this important role it is much appreciated.

Sadly, we lost Heather Wilkinson last year and at the November meeting we co-opted Richard Brown to replace her, thank you Richard for taking this on.

I would like to express our thanks to both our District Councillor Andrew Mellon and County Councillor Jane Storey. Andy has been a great support on planning issues and has represented our views at District Council with vigour, he has also provided £850 of his Locality money toward the proposed Speed Activator Devices.

Jane Storey has been our County Councillor for many years, and we thanked her at the last meeting for her considerable efforts. Jane during the last year has provided £2,000 from her locality budget toward the Speed Indicator Devices and in addition £750 to equip Julia Dunncliffe with a computer and printer to carry out her role as Clerk.

Thursday's County Council election will be interesting as both Jane and Andy are standing along with two other candidates.

Let me at this point update you on Speed Indicator Devices, there has been considerable pressure from residents for the Parish Council to try and reduce speeding vehicles in the village, the locality money has been promised and in fact £2,850 is now in the bank account. We have agreed with Traffic Technology to provide the signs and details of this have been widely discussed with parishioners the problem we have is we cannot reach agreement with Suffolk County Council Highways for the location of the two posts. The SID would alternate between the posts. We wanted one SID at the entrance to the village from Finningham just before Crown Cottage, but SCC Highways insist it must be 70 meters beyond the 30 MPH sign which would put it outside The Crown which frankly does not achieve what we require. I pointed out to SCC that Stowlangtoft has a SID just inside the 30 MPH sign, but they replied it had been illegally sighted! The other we agreed would be on the

left just before The Cottage on the village green. I would like to widen the discussion during the Parish Meeting because we are getting nowhere.

Planning has continued to be part of the meetings, thank you to Steve Caley who has led the wider planning consultation and Westhorpe's submission to the Joint Local Plan.

There have been planning applications at Hills View and Church Farm which were supported. However, the planning application for further properties on Westhorpe Road, Finningham was very strongly opposed, the road has been subject to considerable regular flooding, the area was outside the land designated for the Joint Local Plan and clearly unacceptable.

Our thanks to Sue Hull who investigated the possibility of an electric car charging point funded by Suffolk County Council, the problem is that the village hall has limited parking already and could lose any parking space, we asked Mid Suffolk District Council if their land to the west of the village hall might be suitable and they replied no. Thank you Sue for making the application.

Thank you to John Gomer for repairing the Westhorpe sign on the Finningham Road.

We are pleased that the bus service 387 to Stowmarket has been retained at least to October 2021 and we very much demand beyond.

We have had to increase the Parish Precept this year historically it had been held much lower than similar villages, but we have had to cover considerable increased costs, but we remain below the precept for Wyverstone, Finningham and Great Ashfield.

I am pleased several residents took up the offer of free trees from the Woodland Trust.

We had a request for the Parish Council to provide land for a memorial tree for Heather Wilkinson the problem is the Parish Council does not own any land. My son Patrick has offered land for memorial trees to be planted at the entrance to Westhorpe Hall.

I am pleased we welcomed the Rural Coffee Caravan to Westhorpe on a couple of occasions this past year.

We are grateful to all those residents who took part in the March Litter Pick due to covid 19 it had to take place in groups of two, but it did make a big difference.

My thanks to all the Parish Councillors for their support this past year at times we seem to have to deal at times with a host of emails, but we have I believe carried out our role well.