

LEVINGTON AND STRATTON HALL PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT April 2022 to April 2023

Now post pandemic restrictions have been removed, the Parish Council has returned to normal operations.

1. Parish Council Meetings

There were 7 meetings during the year and a 71% attendance by Councillors, disappointingly down from the 94% attendance in the previous year.

Better news was that two residents were co-opted during the year which brought the Council to its full membership of 7 Councillors.

2. Planning

All planning applications continue to have full scrutiny by the Council, and each application is considered at meetings held in public. The Parish Council has its own adopted examination process.

16 planning applications were considered [17 in the previous year].

The Council remains vigilant on the wider environment and keeps a close interest in developments within the East Suffolk Coastal Local Plan and the impact of national infrastructure projects. The following are examples:

I. Site 12.56 – Housing development at Red House Farm.

Outline Planning Application has been received and considered by the Parish Council at a meeting attended by approaching 50 residents. This application was opposed for reasons of visual impact on the built and natural environment, overdevelopment of the site, road safety, increased demand on poor water utilities, and inappropriate development in a small village as described in the ESC Hierarchy of Settlements.

II. Site 12.20 – Business Park, Old Felixstowe Road. Watching brief in parish of Nacton.

III. Site 12.21 – Ransomes, Nacton Heath – construction has finished with possible pollution, visual impact, and traffic volume at Seven Hills junction.

3. Finance

The Council continues to effectively manage its finances and operates within budgets.

The Council increased its Precept by 3.9% for 2023/24 to meet increased cost pressures but mindful of the impact of the high cost of living and the impact of high inflation on residents.

Our reserves are healthy due to prudent fiscal management.

A satisfactory audit of accounts was received from the Auditor.

Good governance is also assured and monitored by the Internal Control Statements and the external auditor. The Council adopted the revised Code of Conduct for Councillors.

4. Various Items

During the year, the Council considered eclectic range of topics, and the following is just an example of a few:

i. Platinum Jubilee

Our thanks and gratitude to the organising committee which arranged and delivered a celebration fitting for our Queen. Also, thanks to all the residents who contributed much time and effort to a successful day, and our Parish Clerk who arranged for the road closure. Having agreed a budget for the event, the Parish Council agreed to underwrite all the costs to the tune of £2,000 but through the generous grant of our SCC, and other measures, the event made a small financial surplus.

Sadly, this event was followed a short while later by the death of our Queen.

Due to organisational fatigue, the celebration of the Coronation would be a simpler affair, in keeping with the wishes of the King.

ii. Village Sign

The village sign was renovated in celebration of the Platinum Jubilee with the cost being covered by the Parish Council. Our thanks to all those involved.

iii. Public Footpaths

Due to the comments by many walkers about the dangers they faced when confronted by cyclists misusing the public footpaths, plus the increased erosion caused by cyclists, the PC agreed, with the agreement of the landowners, to place no cycling signs at various points to discourage off road cyclists. Some have already been vandalised and it remains to see the effectiveness of the signage.

iv. Anti-social Behaviour

ASB has again been experienced in the village [excessive noise/drug taking] mainly in the pull-in to Trickers Wood and on the benches on Church Field. The police were informed, followed up, and increased their patrols for a while. Further action needs to be considered if this persists.

Fly tipping and inconsiderate dropping of rubbish continue to be a problem but with the help of ES Norse and residents, our parishes are kept tidy.

The Parish Council replaced an old dog litter bin in Pilots Way and increased its capacity. Annoyingly, some inconsiderate dog owners do still not collect their dog's poo, and this fouls Church Field and the neighbouring areas.

v. Defibrillator

Due to the generosity of Bob Hardwick, a defibrillator was purchased for the village. The PC funded the cost of fitting and electrical connection, and the Trustees of the village hall agreed to it being fitted next to the entrance of the hall. Andrew Timmins and Sally Long volunteered to be the defibrillator Guardian and Assistant Guardian; this means they keep the cabinet clean and make sure the defibrillator is in working order, but they are not operators of the equipment as anyone of us would be the operator if it were needed in an emergency.

vi. Sizewell C

This development received a Development Consent Order by the S of S in September 2022. The supply of water has been the subject of challenge in the High Court, and a decision is pending.

The major impact for our parishes is the Freight Management Facility and the PC has met with representatives of the Sizewell C development as it has continuing concerns about road safety.

More recently, there has been a planning application to a temporary water extraction facility on this site due to water problems at the main development site.

vii. Perceived Speeding in the Village

Due to various comments from residents about vehicles speeding through the village, research was undertaken with the involvement of the police and the outcome was that there was very little speeding through the village. However, this would be kept under review.

viii. Warm Room/Community Hub

Due to the pressures caused by high energy prices, the Parish Council successfully gained funding from the Ease the Squeeze/Cost of Living budget to create a Warm Room in the village hall over the winter months. This could not operate without the tremendous effort of local volunteers. Our grateful

thanks to Helen Kingston-Ross and Sally Long for their organisational skills and the wonderful group of volunteers who kept this going for 5 months.

This has now developed into the warmer months as the Community Hub, funded by our SCC, so that residents can socialise once a fortnight, and hone their jigsaw skills!

ix. Website

Olli's fantastic website he created for Covid times was coming to the end of its useful life. The PC has started to revamp its website and Phase 1 was completed this year.

x. Suffolk Awards

Our entry gained us a place in the finals so well done to all those involved with our entry.

5. Thank you and Appreciation

i. Our Parish Clerk and Responsible Officer, Angie Buggs, has provided immense support to us and our residents, and ensured the Parish Council remains lawful in all that it does. She has achieved this with the utmost professionalism and skill, and the Parish Council thanks her for this highly valued support.

ii. Our County Councillor Pattie Mulcahy was recently elected, and we thank her for her kind donation of £1,000 towards our Platinum Jubilee celebrations [covered the cost of hiring a large marquee] and for funding the cost of our Community Hub.

We also thank our District Councillors Mick Richardson and Richard Kerry for their support during the year.

iii. We also thank our local police officers for providing support wherever they can.

iv. Ann Wignall continues to produce our village Newsletter. The Parish Council collaborates closely with the editor, and we owe a huge thank you to Ann for her fine achievement in returning us to regularly printed editions of our Newsletter. Although I do as little as possible on social media and not the village WhatsApp group, I do get bothered when residents ask questions on it or make ill informed comments, which could be avoided if only they had read their Newsletter – end of rant.

- v. And, personally, thank you to my fellow Councillors for your support during the past year, and much longer for some of you. Additionally, thank you to all the residents who have assisted us throughout the year.

From my reckoning, this is the 20th Annual Report of the Parish Council I have written. We now have a new Parish Council, and we wish them all the best, and look forward to someone who can write vastly better reports.

David Long
Past Chairman
4 May 2023