

Chairman's Report for APM May 2017

This will be my third report as the Chairman of Bredfield Parish Council, and I would like to thank my fellow councillors for their continued support and work for the Council.

In the last twelve months, we have held eight meetings at which a range of topics was discussed including six planning applications.

During the year, we have had the new notice board erected, at the corner of Glebe Road and Woodbridge Road; the new grit bin has (at last) been installed. We lost one of our councillors, Sarah Coker, resigned from the council, due to outside commitments – I would like to thank her for her work with the Council. I am pleased to say that Mr Stuart Belfield has come forward to replace her, and we look forward to his input over the next few months. In addition to the usual meetings, we had a visit from our Member of Parliament, Dr Dan Poulter, who gallantly answered a range of questions.

The speed activated sign continues to give us some difficulties, mainly on the life of the battery, and we continue to investigate this situation. The defibrillator proved its worth, when it was used in August, and since then it has been serviced and checked.

It was intended that the refurbishment of the Village Sign was to be the main item of expenditure during 2016-17, but this has proved somewhat difficult to finalise. We have now identified someone to clean and repaint the sign – the cost of repainting in the existing multi- colour scheme was very high, and it was also thought that the representations of village organisations that have long since disappeared, was no longer appropriate, so a simpler paint scheme has been chosen: we are now awaiting the removal of the sign from its post, and hope to get this underway (finally) this summer.

I have mentioned at both of my last two Annual Parish Meetings, that the question of the War Memorial remains unresolved: it needs a considerable amount of work to restore it, and the responsibility for this is somewhat murky. We have not forgotten it, and work will continue to bring this nearer to a satisfactory conclusion.

Another long-standing problem, which I have raised at previous Annual Meetings, is the poor broadband provision. We regularly nag the Better Broadband Suffolk project, but continue to receive vague or contradictory answers. At present, some of the village may be upgraded before others, and indeed when any upgrades may happen remains uncertain.

We have continued to support the Neighbourhood Development Plan, and at the end of 2016 an Individual Questionnaire was issued to everyone over the age of 12 years in the village. This resulted in a good response (73 %). I can report that the plan, after going through several drafts, has now been written in outline. Before we can proceed to the next stage – Public Consultation - there are several loose ends to be tied. The most difficult is where – if anywhere – new houses may be built. There were several Applications to build houses in the village over the last twelve months and three of these, after being rejected, went to appeal. Two appeals have since been dismissed, and the third remains outstanding, a decision on this will not be made until the completion of the Public Hearing in early-June.

The Quaker burial ground is now marked with a sign, for which the Council made a donation.

The Jubilee Orchard and Meadow has received support, and the Parish Council is pleased with the excellent progress being made with this community facility.

Our activities are typical of the work of the Parish Council – we meet regularly and the most common things we find ourselves dealing with are planning applications, problems with highways, footpaths, looking after public assets etc.

For this we can tax you – each year we can claim money from the Council Tax for our use, and the amount Parish Councils request will help determine how much you pay. The money we get from the District Council is known as the precept, and this last year we requested £4,900 – this was the same as the previous two years.

Much of this money goes out on fixed costs: waste collection, accountancy fees, insurance and wages. Capital expenditure was £7,800: we also spent money on controlling the moles on the village green, purchasing a new notice board and supporting the Neighbourhood Plan.

For the next financial year, we have budgeted for a spend of around £6,500: apart from the fixed expenses we have budgeted for speed sign improvements, plus the village sign refurbishment. The Jubilee Meadow will be supported and money will be ear marked for the next project – painting the Pump.

If you wish to see the exact figures, then you may now do so with ease. I would again remind everyone of the website: <http://bredfield.onesuffolk.net/> which contains all the Parish Council material we must show by law, and lots more beside. I would extend thanks to Councillors Anne Henderson for her work keeping our website up to date and David Leyland for the financial details.

Finally, I would just add that all our meetings are free for the public to attend, and we always have a section of the meeting for parishioners to voice any concerns they may have.