

DALHAM AND DUNSTALL GREEN PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 19TH MAY 2021

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

My report last year highlighted the dramatic impact of the lockdowns ordered by Government to reduce the effects of Covid-19, and accordingly I am pleased to be able to note in this report that the restrictions imposed now finally seem to be coming to an end. The fact that I am at last able once again to address a face-to-face meeting in the Village Hall rather than a Zoom meeting is a satisfying demonstration of this.

Whilst it has been a long haul to get here, I will reiterate how pleased I am that the parish and its residents have come through the events of the last year so well. I would especially like to thank all those who helped out their neighbours, whether informally or through the auspices of the Dalham Volunteers Group. Your efforts were greatly appreciated.

Despite the circumstances, the parish council was able to continue its activities without undue disruption during the year. There was a steady flow of planning applications to consider, including those for a new house at the rear of the Affleck Arms and an extension at Sounds Cottage, as well as numerous proposals relating to tree surgery and removal. The revised retrospective application for affordable housing at the Woodyard was rejected by West Suffolk councilors last summer, but subsequently approved on appeal by the Secretary of State.

The parish submitted its views as part of both the consultation by Government on proposed changes to the national planning system and the consultation by West Suffolk District Council on the issues and options for its new Local Plan.

The new circular walks in the parish developed in 2019-20 proved timely for residents and visitors in lockdown, and demand for footpath leaflets was sufficiently high for our stockpile to be exhausted and replacements ordered towards the end of the year. Heavy usage damaged some sections of footpath, and maintenance tasks will be a priority going forward.

The council has continued to lobby for road safety improvements, including in particular on Stores Hill. Following local consultation, it also submitted a proposal under Suffolk County Council's Quiet Lanes initiative to designate the Denham Road up to the junction with Dunstall Green Road and the boundary with Barrow cum Denham council as a Quiet Lane. This initiative should move forward in the coming year.

The council's financial position remains healthy, with a substantial surplus of income over expenditure during the year, due to the parish having secured additional locality funding to defray the costs of the new village sign (through our County Councilor) and in support of the Quiet Lanes project (through our District Councilor). Their help on these and other issues is greatly appreciated.

During the course of the year, we unfortunately saw two of our councilors, Simon Bates and Claire McDonagh, retire from their roles, but were pleased to welcome two new councilors, Ann Ward and Ian Petchey, who were co-opted earlier this year. Our vice chairman, Isobel Aylott, has elected to step back from that role due to the pressure of other commitments, including the Quiet Lanes project, but remains a councilor. I am, as ever, very grateful to all my fellow councilors, and particularly our Parish Clerk Joanne Kirk, for their hard work and support in carrying on the council's business.