

## Yaxham Parish Council – Annual Report 2021/2022

The past year has been a challenge for all of us. A year ago, we were hoping we were emerging from the pandemic and few thought it would still be a major concern for a further 12 months. However, it was and contributed to disrupting our normal cycle of meetings. Hopefully we are now back to a more settled routine with meetings being generally on the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of each month at 7pm in the David Myhill Room – here's hoping.

The Parish Council and the community rose brilliantly to the Covid challenge, and Yaxham Cares has continued throughout the last two years to help the elderly and vulnerable in our community to navigate these challenging times. My thanks to everyone involved including Louise Dye who is now the volunteer organiser.

The play area project finally kicked-off last May. After fraught months it was officially opened on a glorious day in September by Breckland Cabinet member Cllr Alison Webb. It was immediately put to the test by the older pupils of Yaxham Primary School – and I counted over 30 pupils on the play equipment at one time. It was great that the Headteacher, Jennie Muller, and some of her staff and parents all joined in. The Community Café was also open that day and did a roaring trade. My thanks to Parish Cllrs Chris Couves and Bob Gust for leading the Play Area Working Group of formal and informal volunteers that made this project work. The YVAA played its part as well – thank you. The project was funded by: the Parish Charity, the Parish Council, the old Social Club and Breckland Council – again, thank you. With the remaining balance of funds, it is good to see the two new springers have been added to the play area for the youngest children to enjoy.

There is now the potential opportunity to expand the Play Area with possible funds by Badger Building Ltd, who are building 25 new homes on Norwich Road.

It was reported that a more hygienic dog bin had been placed in Well Hill and a new waste bin at the Norwich Road bus shelter – with thanks to Cllrs Lowings and Gust.

A site meeting had been held between County Cllr Connolly, Cllrs Couves and Gust and two Highways representatives with the landowner to agree the action necessary to re-instate the Green Lane bridle way (RB8) with a suitable surface for pedestrians.

Provision of a bus shelter in Clint Green has yet to be finally resolved, because of different views amongst Clint Green residents. Rest assured that the sum of £2,600 insurance pay-out is being held in the Council's reserves pending resolution.

Much has happened on planning and infrastructure works. After many meetings, discussions and Breckland planning meetings, Flagship now knows what it has to do to manage the sewage and surface water run-off from the site. The Elm Close surface water will run through pipes from the site to the St Peter's Close ditch. This will feed into the ditch – hence the requirement for Flagship to clear, reinstate and reinforce the ditches and culverts all the way from St Peter's Close to the River Tudd to drain the surface water (which should also help the St Peter's Close sewage and flooding issues) at Flagship's expense. The sewage condition requires a holding tank at the Elm Close development for up to 48 hours output so that it does not overwhelm the existing sewage pumping stations at Norwich Road & St Peter's Close – again at Flagship's expense. My thanks to Cllr Conway for being able to attend and speaking at the Planning Committee meeting in December that helped to secure these requirements.

We also managed to persuade Flagship to cancel their proposed groundwater heat source project that would have some 24 boreholes 240m deep in the area in front of the one-bed bungalows facing

Norwich Road. This would have taken 6 months to do and would only have provided heat for some 17 homes out of St Peter's Close total of 53 homes. This would have been an awful lot of noise and disruption for the village for potentially the 6 months of the summer this year.

The construction of 25 homes on land to the north of Norwich Road has now started by Badger Building Ltd. This is causing enough noise and disruption. Imagine the disruption caused if the Flagship ground source heat pumps project had gone ahead as well.

On the flooding and sewage issues, Yaxham has been included in the first tranche of 16 villages to be made a priority by Lord Dannatt's county-wide strategic flood partnership – thanks to George Freeman MP. This has raised the profile of the issues we have and caused especially Anglian Water to take our concerns seriously. The existing sewage pumping stations at Norwich Road and St Peter's Close have been upgraded and telemetry added that allows flows of sewage to be better managed. The proposed new pumping stations at Elm Close and Badger Builders will be included in that arrangement. The Paper Street and Spring Lane pumping stations have also been brought to Anglian Water's attention. At a recent meeting with Anglian Water representatives and councillors sought Anglian Water's assurance that the sewage network and pumping stations could cope properly with both existing housing and new development.

Breckland's Local Plan is being reviewed (again). We had real concerns that the Breckland timetable could lead to our parish being exposed for up to 5 years to uncontrolled building. Yaxham played a prominent role in the formation of "Concerned Breckland Parishes." In the end we were unsuccessful, but we all need to remain alert to the emerging issues in the plan. As a first step there has been a call for new sites for development – and you can probably guess where will be put forward in Yaxham. In time sites put forward will be assessed for sustainability and put to the community for consultation. We must be ready as we were previously in 2016 to challenge inappropriate proposals.

Our neighbourhood Plan is now 5 years old and it is time to start thinking of a Review. However, the NP4Yaxham Working Group consisted of volunteers and only one parish councillor. To make this work this time, which will not be as onerous, we are asking for volunteers to come forward to help spread the load. Grants are available for a Neighbourhood Plan review but it may be necessary to use parish council funds to help ensure this important planning protection for our parish is as good and strong as it can be. My thanks to Cllr Oechsle for all she has done on the planning front this year.

My apologies for the length of this report – but the parish council has many roles and responsibilities and it is important you are aware of what is being done on your behalf.

Sadly, this is the last annual Parish Council annual report that I shall give, as due to health issues tonight is my last time as Chairman of the Parish Council and as a Parish Cllr. There have been many kind words – for which my thanks. My huge thanks go to my Cllr colleagues for all that they do – including Cllr Conway who stepped forward to become a Cllr in June. My thanks to Richard and Maggie for covering for me in my recent absence. And great thanks to Rebecca for stepping forward in the autumn to become our new Clerk. Our previous Clerk, Heidi, was a hard act to follow – but Rebecca has risen to the challenge and is doing brilliantly thank you.

That's it folks – thanks again to everyone. Good luck for the future.

Ian Martin  
Chairman.