

CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT APRIL 2021

Parish Council Meetings. As a result of lockdown measures in response to the C-19 pandemic, during the past year PC meetings have been held via Zoom. Regular meetings will be resumed as soon as lockdown measures allow and the Village Halls re-open for use.

Precept & Finances. The reserves are currently close to £8,000 and include a 'ring-fenced' element to cover the cost of maintaining ditches on Parish land as well general reserves. The precept was raised by £240 to £8,300 for 2021/22 in order to meet increasing costs.

As in previous years the Parish Council has been involved in a range of activities that are considered below.

Website. The Parish Clerk has received training and will be developing and improving that PC's website: <https://marlingfordcolton.wixsite.com/mcpc>

Highways. The main issues have been with flooding in various parts of both villages and damaged or obscured traffic signs. Last year's Norwich Half Marathon was cancelled but it is expected that both it and Norwich Gazelles' 10K events will take place this year.

The PC is represented on the Norwich Western Link local working group to consult on plans to complete the final section of the Northern Distributor Route.

The PC has also commented on possible routes for the dualling of the A47 between Tuddenham and Easton.

Footpaths. Public Footpaths in both villages are monitored regularly and are in a satisfactory condition.

Transport. Details of current transport services are available on village noticeboards and the PC will continue to lobby for improvements.

Broadband. Despite repeated promises from both providers and government dating back many years, broadband provision within the Parish remains patchy and very poor in parts of Marlingford. The PC will continue to press for better provision.

Policing. The Parish continues to enjoy a low incidence of crime, but it remains important that all crimes and incidents are reported to enable Police to detect patterns. The PC is appreciative of the excellent relations with our local beat officer, PC Stu Barnard, and it was with regret that we learned he has been transferred to other duties. We wish Stu every success in his new deployment and hope his successor soon will make themselves known and continue in the same vein.

Sports and Recreation Facilities. Due to the Lockdown, use of the facilities in both villages has been necessarily curtailed but it is hoped the easing of restrictions will enable a gradual return to normal. Colton Play Area is on leased land and despite repeated attempts, the owner has so far ignored requests to discuss renewing the lease. This has prevented any further development or improvement of facilities, although essential maintenance will continue. In Marlingford a group of parents has expressed interest in developing and managing the village's exercise and amenity facilities. This is a most welcome development and the PC looks forward to working with this group in the coming year.

Planning Applications. In the past year the PC has:

- Dealt with five applications in total, none of which were opposed.
- South Norfolk approved all five of these.

Greater Norwich Development Plan. Consultation has continued and the PC has submitted its response voicing concerns and opposition to some of the proposals.

Hornsea Wind Farm Project. The PC has participated in consultations and will monitor and respond as further details emerge.

Thanks. A great deal of work is done by volunteers working for a number of organizations in our villages. Particular thanks go to Clare Howard and the team for producing The Grapevine, Justin Ritchie his help in various tasks, particularly in helping Paul Hammerton clear ditches recently, Ben Fielker for helping trim hedges, our Village Hall Committees, and the organizers, Jean and Dave Ditton, and volunteer drivers for the Community Car Scheme.

I would like to thank Margaret Dewsbury, our District and County Councillor, for her untiring work and continued support, including grant funding.

Thanks also goes to Maria Hutson who joined as Parish Clerk early last year and quickly tackled a backlog of work that had accumulated following Heidi Frary's departure.

After many years of auditing PC accounts, Mr Bill Blatch has decided to relinquish this role. Our thanks to Bill for all his efforts and support.

I would like to express my thanks to my fellow members of the Parish Council: serving on a PC often demands considerable time, much of which is spent between monthly meetings and is often not readily apparent to residents. It has been a pleasure to serve with every one of them and their continued commitment is much appreciated. We have had one resignation from the PC, Mr Martin Hemming, and intend to co-opt a replacement.

Finally, this has been my second term as Chairman and while it has been an honour to serve in this role again, because it has always been my intention to step down after three years, I shall vacate the Chair at the AGM in May. I wish my successor well & will continue to support our community in other ways.

Julian Blackmore

April 2021