

Great Shelford Parish Council

Chairman's Report 2022

Good evening everyone! It is a pleasure to see you all here after two years of upheaval. Since our last Annual Meeting held in 2019, we have been extremely busy and I am indebted to all our Councillors and Parish Council staff (both past and present) who have put in the time and effort to achieve what we have. This report covers all areas of the parish council including the work of committees and working groups.

This year Councillors will have completed their 4-year term in public office. At present we are unsure which Councillors wish to stand for re-election in the May elections; however we currently have vacancies and would love to see some new faces as we seek to represent better the diversity within our community. If you are interested and wish to know more about becoming a Parish Councillor, please have a chat with Libby later or contact her via the usual methods. Nominations open on 28th March until 4th April.

So what have we done over the last two years?

The village is currently being surrounded by many transport initiatives. One of these is the Cambridge South East Transport Plan (CSET). We have been looking at trying to find an alternative route to the planned CSET busway. Recent developments include the dropping of the previous Mayor's Cambs Autonomous Metro, and the Planning Inspector granting planning permission for a retirement village in Stapleford. We strongly believe that the current CSET plans now need to be reconsidered. We are working with other parish councils, community bodies and individuals to express our concerns over the current plans and highlight the benefits of one of the original proposals to run bus lanes along the A1307. This campaign group is known as 'Better Ways than Bus Ways'.

One other significant area upon which we have been focusing is the East West Railway project linking Oxford to Cambridge. The Parish Council takes issue with the preferred route and believes that proper consideration has not been given to other potential routes.

With so many transport projects in the area, we have set up a Traffic & Transport Infrastructure Working Group comprising Councillors and village residents. Particular thanks go to Councillor Lyn Disley who chairs this group; if anyone is interested in joining the Group please let Lyn know.

Most recently we have had to deal with the issues raised by an article in the Guardian newspaper about the quality of our drinking water. We are chasing Cambridge Water to produce the data and evidence that they promised at our recent meeting.

2020 and 2021 saw two years of severe disruption to all our lives with the Covid pandemic affecting all areas of our society. We are extremely proud of the way our community has worked together to support their fellow residents at a time when many have been unable to

spend time with family and friends. To all volunteers who have helped in any way, a massive Thank You.

In June 2021, Libby White joined us as our new Clerk to the Council. She has encouraged us to move forward with new technology including a bright new website, and new accounting and mapping software. We have been able to declare we have the 'General Power of Competence' which allows us as a council to do a little more beyond the confines of the powers and duties given to us. Essentially we are able to do anything an individual can do, as long as it is not prohibited by law. (We hope to be able to keep this after May 2022, but that depends upon enough people standing for election as a Parish Councillor!)

Seamus is by far our longest serving member of staff and in 2021 we celebrated his 20 year anniversary with the Council. We took this opportunity to revamp the Council image. This included the design of a new council logo, a new uniform for Seamus and after consultation with Seamus, a change of job title to 'Ranger'. We hope that this better portrays the role that Seamus does for the village. Moving forward, as well as making sure the village looks as neat and tidy as ever, we have asked Seamus to look after the Cemetery on a regular basis, as we have been concerned that it wasn't at the standard we all wanted.

With Libby joining us, we said goodbye to Mike Winter, our Clerk of six years and a Parish Councillor before that. We thank him for all his hard work and dedication during his time with the Council.

We also said farewell to Simon Talbott who has been with the parish council for around eight years while he was the priest in charge of St Mary's. Not only did he play a large part as Councillor, Simon was on many different community groups and organisations. He will be sorely missed.

Other notable achievements include:

- Opening of the Playscape with much work undertaken by the Playscape Charity;
- Identifying a Traffic Consultant to look at our concerns about the traffic in Woollards Lane, Church Street and High Street;
- Refurbishment of the football club room to create a safe space for the SSYI charity to carry out their work with the younger members of the community; and
- Identifying a new ground care contractor to look after the grass cutting and general maintenance of the village – Brookfield Groundcare.

Moving forward Great Shelford Parish Council will be working towards:

- Working with the Playscape Charity to create a new skate park - Wheelscape;
- Seeking the Foundation level of the Local Council Award Scheme – to recognise that we are working to best practice (we hope to achieve Quality Council by the end of 2022 but this again depends on elections...);
- Recruitment of a Clerical Assistant to work with Libby (information is available on the website and Facebook – please share);
- Construction of a new paved area around the Pavilion to provide a safe clean area for those watching sport;

- Working through our new Business Plan which outlines our objectives as a whole, but specifically for the next year; and
- Continuing to serve our community to improve the quality of life for residents of the village.

Finally, money! Our budget and precept were agreed at the meeting in January. All the information can be found on the parish council website. The precept request of £279,311 was sent to South Cambridgeshire District Council in January. Based on our workings, we believe this is an increase of 11.34% for the Precept as a whole or 10% on a Band D property, which equates to £12.09 per year. We are still awaiting confirmation from South Cambs who have the accurate details to hand. We have attempted to keep the precept as low as practically possible by moving some of our Earmarked Reserves, amounting to £45,000, towards projects we are looking to undertake during the 2022/23 financial year.