

Ousden Parish Council

Chairman's Yearly Report 2020

Chairman's Report

Introduction

The Parish Council which consists of the same members as the previous year successfully got together for all of its planned council meetings and also covered a number of meetings for village planning issues this year. However, toward the end of the reporting year Councillor Ian Harding, who has been a member of the Parish Council for many years including a full term as Chairman, decided to retire from the role. I am sure that everyone who knows Ian socially or who has worked with Ian on council business will join me in wishing him a long and happy retirement and we at the Parish Council thank him for his hard work over the years. There is now a vacancy for a councillor should anyone wish to join our team.

Other than the Chairman and council members the PC is supported by our Clerk who prepares, researches, administrates and controls a large proportion of our work so I wish to thank Joanne Kirk for her work in keeping the Parish Council in good shape.

I would also like to thank Mary Evans (Suffolk County Council) and Mike Chester (West Suffolk Council) for their continued attendance at our meetings and continued support wherever practicable despite some difficult times.

And finally, I would like to thank the many volunteers in the village who support the village in lots of village ways, for example keeping the village clear of litter, Don Johnson for producing the Ousden News and the people who help deliver it.

Ongoing Village Issues

Police / Neighborhood Watch

Once again, the village has reported little trouble over the last year which is great news. A few incidents of suspicious vehicles / people have been reported but no stolen goods or damage as far as we know. A single report of hare coursing was recorded, and this is a problem in East Anglia in general so one to keep our eyes peeled for.

Finally, one report of robbery of letters from a property with an external letter box which lead to a case of fraud and stolen money. A note of caution with houses with external letter boxes.

A more detailed neighborhood watch report will follow. Please note Helen Gale is still your neighborhood watch coordinator and is regularly in contact with the police and other enforcement / support groups.

My thanks go to Helen for taking on the role and for keeping the village informed of crimes in the village.

Defibrillator

The defibrillator has been up and running for a year now with no reported need for use. The unit is subject to regular monthly checks which ensures it is ready to use should it be required. Remember to call 999 before using the unit. The Parish Council are still hoping to offer some free training and leaflets will be distributed to residents.

Affordable housing

The Parish Council (lead coordinator Ian Harding) carried out a village survey during the year to ascertain what the demand would be for affordable housing in Ousden. The results did not show a particularly high demand but it is of utmost importance that anyone who wishes to register a need that they should do this online via West Suffolk Council's Homelink or simply approach one of your PC members and we will do our best to guide you through the process. Work still continues in conjunction with our neighbouring villages.

Village Hall

The 'Ousden Village Hall Management Committee' and the 'New Build Committee' are still working very hard to get into a position to build a new village hall and planning permission will be sought for the build very shortly. The Parish Council are in full support of this project and during this reporting year agreed and proceeded to pay the full ongoing running costs of the hall which leaves the OVHMC free to concentrate on fundraising for the new hall.

I would like to thank all the volunteers on the Village Hall Management Committee and the New Build Committee for their continued efforts to keep the village hall open and their work to raise money for a new village hall.

Speeding on village roads

Although reports and evidence of the worst cases of speeding through the village seem to have reduced for now there is still an underlying problem with speeding as captured by the Vehicle Activated Sign 'VAS' on a continuous basis and in fact low level speeding incidents are now increasing. This is obviously a continuous concern and in order to try and reduce the numbers again a second site for the VAS has been chosen and agreed which is on the approach to the village from Hargrave which is still to be erected.

In addition, there is no way of securing a speeding conviction with data from the VAS so repeated calls for a police visit to the village have been requested but as yet there have been no visits. In the future the village may have access to a speed monitoring device which is also capable of capturing the number plate details of offending vehicles which may then lead to prosecutions and reduced speeding. The PC continues to follow this subject with great interest.

I would like to thank Ian Harding and David Bartholomew for collecting the VAS from Hargrave and putting it up in different locations around the village, and analysing the data.

Road Drainage on Front Street

A systematic cleanup is being carried out to try and prevent the large volumes of water running freely down the road in heavy rain conditions. The roads around the village were swept during winter after the leaves had fallen and recently the drain gullies were cleaned and flushed in an attempt to get the water running through the drain system correctly and these processes will now take place each year. A period of observation will now take place before further investigation /work is carried out if necessary

Phone box

As people will have noticed the village phone box is finally being made safe and is having a makeover so clearly the decision to retain the box in the village rather than sell it was made. Its final purpose is still not clear, but I am sure it will find a good use for it eventually.

Coronavirus Pandemic

At the time of writing this report we are all in the grips of a serious pandemic which is affecting all our lives with some people suffering greatly. The residents of Ousden are so much luckier than most as we live in a beautiful village and to date the virus itself has not troubled us too much if at all, but my thoughts go out to anyone who is suffering pain or hardship in any way.

As a precaution the Ousden Village Hall Management Committee and Parish Council set up a **community support group** to primarily help its most vulnerable residents but ultimately help anyone who needs general help due to restrictions imposed on the public at large. So far, the group appears to be working well and thank goodness is not presently overstretched which indicates a relatively healthy village and long may this continue.

My final thanks go to all the volunteers and reserve volunteers who have put themselves forward to help without hesitation.