



# Parish Matters

The Newsletter of Poringland Parish Council

January 2021

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*Dear Parishioners,*

## Welcome to our first edition of Parish Matters!

This is a trial of a monthly newsletter to keep you up to date with what is going on at the Parish Council. It's coming to you at the start of our third lockdown. These are strange times for most of us, but emphasises the need for us to work as a community to help keep each other safe and support one another.

**Covid Vaccination Centre** Over the New Year break we have been very busy working with the NHS to help them facilitate a Covid vaccination centre at Poringland Community Centre. It has been fascinating being involved in this project and seeing just how hard the local NHS is working to roll the vaccines out locally. One of the benefits of using the community centre is that the local GP surgeries will remain open for their important day to day business. To ensure this process goes as smoothly as possible, please do not come to the community centre unless you have been instructed to by your surgery. You will be contacted when it is your turn for the vaccine, so please be patient.

**Christmas Fun** Between lockdowns we managed to squeeze in some Covid secure Christmas fun. The tree was

once again a giant feature in the village, and was switched on by a



mystery character who used his magic to enter the community centre and light up the tree. The CCTV footage of this incident has been viewed nearly 5K times! This was followed by Santa and his elf touring

the village in his sleigh, waving to everyone and wishing them a merry Christmas. We had great feedback from this and we're pleased that we were able to bring a little Christmas cheer in difficult times. Finally, we put on a Christmas Trail which allowed children to collect interactive characters around the village to save the Christmas Spirit. Again, we had some very good feedback for this and we're glad we could provide some family fun around the village. We're very grateful for all the help we received from local businesses, Men's Shed, South Norfolk Council and an army of volunteers. These Christmas projects could not have gone ahead without this support.

**Hedges on Overtons Way** Over the Christmas period the Council was also called out to the removal of hedges from the land on Overtons Way. The Parish Council worked with South Norfolk Council to obtain a temporary stop order for the works, but neither party could find means of preventing the destruction of this valued wildlife habitat. At the time of writing, a planning application for residential dwellings and a commercial unit is active, but permission has not been granted.

## Tax Increase Restricted to 3p Per Week

The Parish Council met on 6<sup>th</sup> January. Amongst other items they discussed the budget for 2021/2022 and associated precept (the parish part of the council tax). It has been a very difficult year for the Parish Council in that a substantial amount of income was lost due to the closure of the community centre, and extra had to be spent to enable it to become Covid-secure when it was able to open again. But other parts of the budget were adjusted and reserves dipped into. The Parish Council agreed that this year was not the right time to try to replenish these reserves and restricted the precept increase to 1.89%. As our share of the council tax is so small, this equates to an increase of £1.70 per year for a Band D property (less for properties in Bands A-C). That's 3p per week.

**Temporary Café Closure** The recent lockdown has prompted the Parish Council to close the Café at the community centre on a temporary basis. The café continued to support the community during the November lockdown by providing a takeaway service. However, with vulnerable people attending the community centre for their vaccines, the difficult decision was made to close the café on a temporary basis. But we'll be back with more cakes, coffee and bacon rolls as soon as we can!

**New Year, New Chairman** At the January Parish Council meeting, Tim Boucher stepped down as Chairman of the Council. Tim had been Chairman since the end of 2016 and has been pivotal in steering the council through the Covid crisis, helping the council transition to remote meetings. John Joyce was elected as Chairman by a unanimous vote. Thankfully Tim is not leaving the council and was duly elected as Vice Chairman.

**New Care Provision for Older People** At the Parish Council meeting, councillors considered amendments to the planning application for a 41 bed care home with 10 extra care apartments and 44 extra care lodges, and associated services. This is proposed to be located on the current Cresta Lodge site on Bungay Road. It has been a controversial planning application, with the location of the site not being consistent with some of the aspirations of the emerging Neighbourhood Plan. However, the Parish Council felt that on balance, because this is for a much needed care facility, rather than housing, the parish council should not object.

**Neighbourhood Plan Update** The Neighbourhood Plan is close to being completed. The only policy that remains under discussion a policy that related to small scale sites. In developing the Plan, the local community told the Parish Council, if there is to be further development it should be on small sites (those no greater than one hectare). South Norfolk Council is assisting the Parish Council in coming up with some wording for this policy which will be acceptable and, most importantly, not open to challenge from a developer at a later date. Due to the coronavirus restrictions, a referendum will not be permitted until at least May, so the council has time to make sure that the Neighbourhood Plan is right for the village.

We hope you found our first edition of Parish Matters informative. If you have any feedback, please get in touch with the parish office.

*A Happy New Year, and stay safe*

### Your Parish Councillors

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