



Parish Council Report

Despite these uncertain times, the Parish Council remains active and serving the community. It's not been the easiest of times, given the extremely short notice we have had to respond to changes in government guidance, but we are proud of what we have achieved given the constraints we have had.

We were one of the first councils to respond to holding virtual meetings, so that the democratic business of the council could continue, and using technology we could ensure that our office was able to function virtually.

We have also continued to ensure that the projects within our village progressed. At the time of writing, the transfer to the Parish Council of the community woodland and the lagoon to the south of this, is imminent. We already love the way the woodland is utilised for dens, dreamcatchers, and of course 'Penelope the Python' and we have plans to build upon these ideas so this area continues to be a natural environment for all to enjoy. The lagoon is a haven for wildlife and we will be investigating ways of how the public can safely access this area.

Still Here to Help

During the Covid crisis we worked closely with local groups to help our vulnerable parishioners. We sent out a flier to every household in the village to let them know that help was available via these groups for those that had been adversely affected by the coronavirus crisis. And now we are reiterating this. The Good Neighbours Scheme, manned entirely by local volunteers, could not have made us prouder by helping vulnerable residents by doing tasks such as collecting shopping and prescriptions, and via their befriending service. And South Norfolk Council's Help Hub continues to assist financially for both individuals and businesses, and provides an advice service on matters varying from debt to domestic abuse. Finally, the Poringland Fuel Allotment Trust continues to assist by providing a service for those suffering from financial hardship.

We are very grateful for their continued assistance for local people:

Good Neighbours Scheme: 07934 195724

South Norfolk Help Hub: 01508 533933

Fuel Allotment Trust: 01508 492155

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Once the Community Woodland has been transferred, we will be working with Norfolk Homes to transfer the remaining areas of open space on the Norfolk Homes developments to the Parish Council. The Parish Council has also agreed to accept responsibility for the new play areas on the Clements Gate development, once they have been installed. We look forward to having another leisure area as part of the village's assets.

On matters of planning in the village, we have put forward strong representation on the government's two consultations – 'Changes to the Planning System' and 'Planning for the Future'. Whilst we acknowledge that the planning system can be improved and modernised, we do not believe that this should be at the expense of local consultation and public scrutiny of planning applications. Local knowledge is imperative when planning applications are being considered, particularly in Poringland where local drainage is problematic and services and infrastructure are under pressure.



Our Biggest Challenge!

Undoubtedly the hardest part of post lockdown was the reopening of the community centre. With limited groups able to run, and under great restriction, the easier option would be to keep this community building closed. However, the Parish Council gave great consideration to the building's function, which is to provide a place for people to be together (socially distanced) which improves wellbeing, and to support the small businesses that utilise the building. A considerable amount of work had to be put into a safe opening regime, but we were able to reopen our building in a Covid secure manner. Changes included the implementation of one way systems, increased cleaning schedules, collecting test and trace data and the use of face coverings. We would like to thank our hirers for understanding our restrictions and the changes we have to make, often on short notice, and working so closely with us to make the reopening successful, and for running their classes so safely and effectively. Lists of classes can be found on our website.

But with Every Challenge, an Opportunity!

Having sadly said goodbye to K-Teas in March, our café remained redundant when the community centre first reopened. Given that many people had not left their homes for some time, the Parish Council decided to open up the café as a community venture, giving people a safe space to enjoy a drink and some treats such as home baked cakes, biscuits and bacon rolls. Despite the restrictions this area of the building has to adhere to, because it is essentially part of the hospitality industry, we are pleased with the success of the venture. The feedback we receive on the quality of food, friendliness of service, and the feeling of safety in these difficult times, has made this project more than worthwhile. We would like to thank our parishioners for the support they have shown for the café.



In Other News...

At the time of writing, the community defibrillator project is in its final stages, with the phone box by the church being refurbished courtesy of the Men's Shed, and a defibrillator being installed. We were proud to see our councillor John Hodgson recognised for his work as a Community First Responder, by being named as South Norfolk Council's Community Wellbeing Champion. As part of this award, he nominated the Poringland Community Defibrillator Project to receive a donation, so we will be able to replace the defibrillators or their component parts for many years to come.

We have also worked with a local parishioner who put together a strong, constructive case for the provision of goals for informal football. We have some super football teams in the village, but a need was identified for those who just want an informal kick-around. The goals we have provided are very sturdy with a strong cargo net, so can be climbed on and sat upon when not being used for football. We understand that the children of the village have had a difficult time over the lockdown period, with the play areas being locked and many of their local clubs being temporarily closed, so we hope that they enjoy using these.

We have also sought to improve the aesthetics of the village by planting bulbs. This has again come as a result of engagement with a parishioner who put together a case for this project. We are looking forward to a show of colour around the village in the spring.

And Finally...

After the great success of our community Christmas event last year, we had great plans to go even bigger and better this year. Due to Covid restrictions we cannot have a similar event that would encourage a social gathering, but we have been working on alternative plans. And there will of course be the Christmas tree located at the community centre, which could well be bigger and better than last year!