

BRISLEY ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Minutes of the annual parish meeting held virtually, due to Covid, at 7.00pm on Wednesday 5th May 2021.

The meeting was chaired by Cllr Henry Collinge, with speakers from the organisations listed below, 12 members of the public (including all parish councillors and the Clerk) were present.

1. Welcome and to receive apologies for absence.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from D/Cllr Gordon Bambridge and C/Cllr Mark Kiddle-Morris.

2. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 9th May 2019.

The minutes of the meeting were accepted and will be signed by the Chairman as a true record in due course.

3. Parish Council Matters:

a) Chairman's Report.

A copy of the report presented by the Chairman is attached.

b) Higher Level Stewardship Scheme Report.

A copy of the report presented by Cllr Peter Dennis is attached.

c) Allotment Report.

A copy of the report presented by Cllr Peter Dennis is attached.

d) Brisley Common Pond Project.

A copy of the report by Mrs Bridget Diggins is attached, as presented by Cllr Curl.

4. Reports from Local Organisations:

a) Parochial Church Council.

A copy of the report presented by Mr Hugh Fawcett is attached.

b) Village Hall Management Committee.

A copy of the report presented by Mrs Chris Abel is attached.

c) Brisley Primary School.

A copy of the report by Mr Jo Kerkham, Head of School, is attached, as presented by Cllr Irons.

d) Brisley Cricket Club.

A copy of the report presented by Mr Bill Fordham is attached.

e) Age UK.

A copy of the report given by Mrs Kathryn Woodley, Chairman, is attached, as presented by Mrs Mary Carden.

5. Councillor Reports:

a) District Councillor.

A copy of the report from D/Cllr Gordon Bambridge is attached.

b) County Councillor.

A copy of the report from C/Cllr Mark Kiddle-Morris is attached.

6. Open Forum - this is an opportunity for residents of the parish to express their views on matters of interest or concern relating to the village and to suggest ideas for the future.

There were no matters raised.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and for presenting their reports and the meeting closed at 7.36pm.

Signed:

Date:

These minutes will be ratified at the 2022 Annual Parish Meeting.

Chairman Annual Report 2021

Over the last 12 months we have all learnt to view our lives differently. Despite adjusting to a pause in our hectic lifestyles Brisley has pulled together to support each other and keep calm and carry on, all be it with a two-metre gap between us.

This time last year, our amenity area had 1000's of supposedly biodegradable tree guards, after the idea from Councillor Savoury to place bins for the tree guards around the area and signs to ask those taking their daily exercise, to remove and dispose of the tree guards; Brisley stepped up to the challenge and removed all tree guards in a matter of weeks and thanks goes to all those that got involved. By removing the guards the trees and bushes are flourishing. In addition the council has carried out much needed maintenance on the woodland area ensuring a health wood in the future. Ragwort on the amenity area was treated, and the prevalence of this weed has greatly diminished this year.

We also have seen our play area expanded and disabled friendly swing installed thanks to the hard work in locating grant funding by Councillor Irons.

The parishes christmas tree project was also kicked off but Councillor Dennis, a project that is going well entering the 2nd year and hopefully will provide income for the parish in years to come.

Footpaths and bridleways have also had a renewed focus as Councillor Fairman continues to challenge our county councillor to ensure that people have the ability to find and walk the paths around our village; this has meant we have seen new fingerposts installed, repairs to bridges and hedges cut back where necessary to give all free access to the area.

The parish grass cutting has been maintained and we have received several compliments about the appearance of the village from both parishioners and visitor alike.

We saw an unprecedented level of rainfall over this winter however, the continuing work to clear ditches, and the renovation work on ponds have been successful in reducing the amount of flooding seen in the parish this winter.

Improvements to reporting has ensured that highways issues have improved in the parish. Issues such as potholes can now easily be reported and resolved quickly ensuring our roads are pothole free.

We have had regular access to a SAM2 sign that measures both quantity and speed of traffic through the village. The council is using this information to campaign for further road safety measures in the village and have successfully secured additional slow signs on approach to the village on the B1145.

In one of the highs of the last 12 months but unfortunately one of the lows as well, the council through the incredibly hard work by the Clerk, Councillor Dennis and Councillor Savoury secured a grant of approximately £100,000 for the village common. This was an unprecedented amount of money and would have secured the future of the common for at least the next 10 years. It is with great sadness that I report we were not able to find agreement from all grazing rights holders to enable us to accept the offer of this grant so the project ultimately was unsuccessful.

In addition the parish council has continued to support the pond project on the green, worked with a buddying system during the first lockdown, ensuring no Brisley resident was left alone at this difficult time and supported the cricket club in loaning money for a new mower.

I'm aware I've gone on to the second page, there are many more example of both councillor and individuals who have given time, effort, expertise and energy to the village over the last 12 months, there are just too many to mention in this report.

I would however, like to take this opportunity to thank everyone that has helped out, from throwing the odd tree guard in the bin, litter picking, clearing scrub, writing funding applications, working with experts, clearing ponds, to sitting on our committees and running events for the village to enjoy.

Thank you, your efforts are what makes Brisley the thriving village in which we all live.

Henry Collinge

Chairman: Brisley Parish Council

Harpers Green – HLS

The area looks in in good order despite a very hot, dry summer limiting grass growth and hence restricting the amount of grazing available. Ideally the common should be grazed by hardy native breeds of cattle which would control gorse and undergrowth better than young beef cattle. The normal maintenance of mowing the area in September was carried out to control scrub. This year some further scrub clearance was undertaken with a mulcher which effectively opened up an overgrown tract so that the cattle could access adjoining grass areas and hopefully get grass regeneration on the treated site.

Allotments

The allotments are in good heart despite the challenges that the weather and bird population provide! There is always something that wants to eat that which you have just sown, the reason you will see a lot of netting in use. At the moment there are nine tenants on site and we would welcome some more.

A further ninety Nordman firs where planted in February as part of the ongoing Christmas Tree project and we hope they have a better start weather wise than lasts years which survived very hot and dry conditions. Unfortunately because off Covid the school was unable to help with planting this year.

BRISLEY COMMON POND REPORT 2020/21

After the great momentum of autumn 2019 when we managed to excute a major clearance on Ponds 12 and 13 including silt removal, all works stalled during 2020 due to partly Covid and partly the need to wait until entitlement to grants became clear post Brexit.

However one parishioner did clear the pond fronting their garden – I think No 7 on the map, and the pond No 10 outside The Bell was cleared through the Upper Wensum Farm Cluster Group taking out a large willow and all the invasive grass. Both these look super – thank you to all concerned.

On the south side of the common the next two ponds requiring urgent attention are 16a and b which have become heavily overgrown and heavily silted up. Regrettably the culvert taking water on from these two ponds down the side of the common to Pond 17 has clearly broken causing a blockage. The overflow from these ponds flooded onto adjoining farmland thereby being wasted from the catchment down to the Wensum.

It is hoped that David Daniels might very kindly open up and mend this culvert so as to avoid his field being flooded again, but the bottom line remains that these two ponds urgently need attention in the autumn.

Regrettably our hopes of funding have been dashed as the Parish council will not be getting the Countryside Stewardship fund. This money was considerable and would have afforded us the luxury of restoring all the ponds and ditches, not to mention maintaining and improving the biodiversity of the common.

As ever, anyone who is keen to help this autumn should keep in touch with either me or Sheryl and as soon as we can get some funds we shall be making plans.

Bridget Diggins
12 April 2021

Report for the year 2000 to Brisley Parish Council 5th May 2021

Hugh Fawcett, Churchwarden

2020 was a year like no other because of Covid-19. The consequence was that services were much reduced but other aspects to do with improving the building continued.

Services took place in the usual way until 8th March. On 17th March all routine services were cancelled as we went into lockdown although 'pastoral' services continued with limited attendance. The church was closed to visitors and remained so until we were able to resume socially distanced services in July and which then continued until the end of the year.

We were able to hold one wedding with restricted attendance and no hymns in October.

As no singing has been permitted we were unable to hold our carol service in the conventional way. We were, however, able to enjoy a lovely Christmas Celebration with readings and music. Our grateful thanks go to Margaret Vincent and Alan Heath for providing the music (organ, voice and harp) and well done to our own for the readings.

I am able to report that the church is, in general, in good repair.

Approval was granted for roof repairs to the east end of the south aisle which were carried out in June. At the same time the drain repair at the west side of the porch was completed for which approval had been given.

Approval was granted for the installation of a loop system which was duly installed in November.

The bat project came to a halt though it is hoped, subject to Covid, to resume in 2021. Dr Andrea Kirkham was able to update her report on the wall paintings and this was paid for by the bat project (bats have been damaging the paintings). This has meant that a programme has been developed to conserve the wall paintings, subject to further repairs to the south aisle roof being carried out as this continues to leak in more extreme weather conditions. It is hoped this work will be done during 2021. Approval was given which allowed Dr Kirkham to do repair work to the piscina at the east end of the south aisle.

We hope to install under-pew heating in the nave but permission for this has not yet been granted.

Report to Brisley Parish Council

on Village Hall activities

March 2020 – April 2021

March 23rd 2020: a date few of us will forget – lockdown. Who knew how long it would last and how much it would disrupt our lives? For the Village Hall that meant the cancellation of events we had been planning over the summer – the VE Day celebrations, the Bear Hunt and of course our regular cinema offering.

We did survive it though with Dave, Ian and Sheryl and many others organising volunteers who shopped, collected medication and supported vulnerable people. We even shared our precious toilet rolls with those who didn't have any. Ian Edwards kept us entertained with his daily musings from The Thatched House and cycled through the village as Harry on Thursdays when we were all out clapping for carers. People supplied the telephone boxes with books and puzzles to help people entertain themselves at a time when we were only allowed out for an hour a day. The telephone boxes are still being used regularly: already today I have seen people stop and pick up books.

During the summer lockdown we took the opportunity to install new heaters in the Village Hall so that the space heated up more quickly in the cooler months. With a grant from the Lottery Fund we were able to do repairs to the potholes in the overflow car park and make the area close to the doors of the Village Hall more accessible to patrons with mobility issues. Sadly, the overflow car park has been badly churned up over the wet winter months so the plan is to rectify this (hopefully with some financial help from the PC) during the coming summer.

Ahead of the reopening of the Village Hall in the summer last year, we purchased hand sanitisers, cleaning sprays, wipes and a disinfecting fogging machine. We created signage and procedures for users of the Hall and produced a Risk Assessment which is on display. We also purchased a card machine to take contactless payments.

The 'rule of 6' inside frustrated our attempt to reopen the cinema in the autumn. However, we did hold a small socially-distanced Halloween evening on the car park where hot chocolate was served and the children received bags of spooky sweets.

In December as the second lockdown was lifted, we decided we needed an event to lift all our spirits, so the Festive Santa Walk was conceived. Aimed at families we held a covid-safe, socially-distanced event on the car park and the amenity. It involved a walk around a course on the amenity, a few games on stalls on the car park, a chat with Father Christmas, whilst being serenaded by a small group from the Fakenham Ukes. Free sausage rolls, mince pies, mulled wine and hot chocolate

were provided. The event was well attended and in addition to a great day we raised over £700 for EACH.

We have loads of ideas for future events but until we can be certain how the lifting of restrictions will play out, we cannot firm up all of our plans. With fingers crossed we have the following dates pencilled in:

17th May - reopening of the Village Hall. Shortly after that date our regular hirers will return

25th June – reopening of Brisley Cinema (with reduced capacity)

17th July – Brisley Bearstival

The Hall will of course be open for the elections on May 6th. A special Risk Assessment has been done for that day.

As far as the building and car park are concerned, we plan to improve the overflow car park (with the help of the PC) this summer.

The roof is a cause for concern so we are investigating potential costs at the moment and will explore possible sources of help with funding with the plan to get the work carried out sooner rather than later.

Chris Abel

Chair, Brisley Village Hall Committee

Brisley Village Hall is maintained by the Community for the Community. Please support us moving forward.

Report for Parish Council 24/4/21

We are currently two weeks into the Summer Term and the children have been back in school for 5 weeks. Well-being surveys show that the children are feeling safe and well cared for in school; they are happy that they can cope with their work and they know what is expected of them.

Teacher assessments show that the greatest impact of missed learning from the most recent lockdown was on the youngest children for whom play and language development is so important. Monitoring of lost learning in core academic skills showed in October 2020 that our children at Brisley kept learning progressing faster than National Averages, but that some of the basics did slip backward. Independently writing at length, perseverance with harder problem solving in Maths and confidently speaking in front of a group are areas that teachers report difficulties in across the school. We are focussing on Oracy, writing and mental calculations to help catch up.

Two fifths of the school children were in school every day as part of the key worker and vulnerable group from January till March 8th 2021. The rest were at home with in the main very good support from their parents. We used an online platform called Purple Mash to share work. Teachers recorded videos for the parents and children to access which explained some of the learning daily or weekly. Work was handed back to the teachers on the same platform. Additional support was provided for seven families via laptop loans, one of which was funded by the Parish Council. This laptop is still in use for one very grateful family in the village and is well used for weekly homework tasks where spelling and maths is set using online programmes. Teachers marked online work for the children in the evenings as well as working intensely with groups in school in the day and reported never feeling as tired as they did at the end of the Spring term (March 2021). The commitment and dedication of all the teachers, support staff, management teams, office staff and the caretaker to the children of the school cannot be underestimated.

Since returning to school in January 2021, we have recommenced a full curriculum with additionally forest schools, individual music tuition, some after school clubs, whole class singing and whole school assemblies via zoom meetings. We do however, remain very cautious not to open up too quickly as we do not want to provide any traction for the virus. So, for this Summer term, the classes remain in bubbles, children enter and exit school through different entrances, they play separately at breaks and visitors are kept to a minimum. We have not recommenced swimming yet, trips out require additional layers of safeguarding and Reverend Robin has not yet been able to visit in person. We will welcome an inspirational author soon but will do so in our outdoor classroom. Sadly, Sports Day will probably not be open to families, but risk assessments are reviewed weekly by DNEAT.

The Friends of Brisley have continued to meet fruitfully. They provided Easter Eggs for all the children of school at the end of the Spring Term. They ran a fundraising village Easter Egg trail over the Easter weekend. They provided £1000 for the school to buy books for the library, and c.£1400 for a popular and highly effective online Maths programme called Mathswizz which the children access at home and at school to help them stay ahead of the competition. And a lot more besides.

The school is fundraising for an African school so they can have sports kits via 'Kits-for-kids'. We have posted a box of clothing donated by parents this week and are having a sports themed mufty day this Friday to cover the postage costs. School council additionally wish to raise money for new scooters for playground toys. A new coldframe arrived this week and is helping classes to grow veg for the school science garden.

The reputation of the school appears to be good with prospective parents. We have had 8 new children arrive with us this year on top of the September intake. Intake for September 2021 is also strong. Some year groups are full (Pupil Admissions Number is 15 per year group). We have 77 children on roll out of a maximum of 105, so there is still some way to go before we are too full. Staff retention is high. We had a new teacher join us from a different DNEAT school in September – Mr Wild in year 6. The Hope Federation which includes Weasenham and Rudham Schools is a happy family in my view, having experienced four different federations. Myself and Mrs Allen (Executive Headteacher) feel extremely well supported by our governors and the Trust (DNEAT).

Mr Jo Kerkham

Head of School

Brisley Cricket Club

March 2021 Report for Brisley Parish Council

2019

The most successful year for the Brisley Cricket Club in terms of numbers of matches played, events organised, registered members and also financial strength.

The end of year finished with a balance of over £4,000.

Sustainable financial model maintained and improved, keeping membership and playing costs to a minimum whilst keeping food and drink prices affordable.

Major Investments:

- New mower for the playing strip
- New bbq and cooking equipment
- Square maintenance

Major Events:

- Village Quiz nights
- YANA Cricket Day
- 15 cricket matches
- Oktoberfest

2020

Financially the most successful year the club has ever had in its 220 year history. Grants due to Covid related expenses and loss of income have greatly benefitted the club.

Major Investments:

- Mower & Equipment servicing
- Square maintenance
- Bowling machine

Major Events:

- 5 cricket matches

2021

After 7 years of absence the Brisley Cricket Club will be represented in the Norfolk Cricket League.

We have entered a team into the Shell Women's Cricket League this year.

Brisley is now affiliated with the Norfolk Cricket Board.

Between all Brisley sides, we have confirmed 22 home matches this year and 12 away fixtures.

Possibly more fixtures to come.

Matches every Friday night from 21st of May until 27th August.

Best place to view upcoming fixtures is in the Upper Wensum Diary

We are expecting a playing membership of around 60 people in total across all sides, plus more non-playing members.

The club constitution and rules plus many policies have been re-constructed to reflect the changes in the club and ECB requirements.

The committee have decided to take some time in order to best agree how to spend the grant money in a way that will be beneficial for the community and the club to survive for many years to come.

Possible investments being considered are:

- Sight screens
- Proper playing pitch covers
- Store room
- Extension to the clubhouse
- Improved outdoor hospitality facilities

Report to Brisley Parish Council Annual Parish Meeting to be held on 5th May 2021

Upper Wensum Valley Age Concern Group (formerly Brisley Age Concern Group).

The last time we met in Brisley Village Hall was for our AGM on 5th March 2020. We held our AGM this year by post and email!

This last year has of course been a particularly difficult one for many of our members – those who live alone, are less mobile now and especially those whose family do not live near. Very few of our members are on line or have mobile phones: so no Zoom, Skype or other video call facilities. It has been isolating and for some deeply depressing not knowing if the last chapter of their lives is going to continue to be like this.

The first task was to make sure that all our members had access to local help and knew the phone calls to make if they needed it. Keeping in contact was important and throughout the year the aim has been to keep the group alive and offer the hope and promise that we would still be active at the end of the pandemic.

With information and guidance from North Norfolk District Council we have been able to manage some things this year with strict anti-Covid-19 measures in place, minimising the risk whilst offering relief from isolation in the interests of mental health. In September and October 2020 we held respectively afternoon tea and lunch for 6 at a time over 3 days in the William Martin Building at St Andrews Church Great Ryburgh. At Christmas and Easter we delivered treats. We recognised everyone's birthday with a delivery of cake or chocolates, flowers and card. We even delivered afternoon tea boxes. Ann English's article in the UWD describes this brilliantly.

We are very grateful to St Andrews for housing us and to many in Great Ryburgh for their help and baking!

We now have a list of events from May to August – afternoon teas, private visits to open gardens and a much delayed Christmas lunch! Hopefully these will all be able to go ahead and we can start planning the rest of the year's activities. I hope Brisley Village Hall will welcome us again in the autumn – may we hope for one of Dave's films please?

We welcome new members – we currently range in age from 62 to 96! I hope this report will entice others to join us.

Best wishes to Brisley.

Kathryn Woodley

Chairman

Councillors report 2020 - 2021 (Upper Wensum Ward)

PREAMBLE

Who would have thought when I last made an annual report that the then 'lockdown' would be refreshed and repeated and that one year later we would still be in this position.

Annual reports by their nature tend to look backwards, but I also like to look forwards, and as I re-read last years missive I can see some predictions I could not achieve, and some where Breckland have been very successful as a unit of government locally.

So where did I fail, well mainly it was in my prediction I would be back attending meetings in the parishes, I was not able to do that, in fact in 2020/21 I only attended 5 formal parish council meetings, compared with an average of 54 in the ward up to that point. This of course alongside all the other events where I represent the ward.

On being taken ill I had spoken to my doctors and they agreed that if I felt capable I could continue working (I was doing around 35/40 hours council work pw) but that I should not be working in the evenings. Wise words as two hours evening meeting, even online, meant virtually nothing next day.

I do give a great tribute to the NHS at the two hospitals who continued to fit me in right through the overload the pandemic had placed upon them, with treatments and clinics right throughout the time, and still continuing.

LOOKING BACK

So how did the predictions all pan out for the year?

Because of the pandemic most meetings for councillors became 'on-line' using ZOOM or TEAMS or similar, this was pretty good for me, also whilst remaining on the cabinet, the reshuffle had moved me from Planning to Environmental and Public Protection portfolio which meant that more work was done on-line anyway. (As reported last year)

At Breckland. In addition to representing you I am a Cabinet member with responsibility for Environmental protection and Public Protection.

My attendance record, as published by Breckland shows I attended 100% of all required meetings, plus 100% of (optional to me) Scrutiny meetings, plus a few others.

Of course that is the tip of a very large iceberg. We started the year with three informal cabinet briefings each week, These are reduced to about one per week now, and at least one with senior officers, plus the several portfolio briefings and decisions to be made on various matters.

These extra meetings by Breckland councillors enabled the efficient rollout of the extra measures demanded by the pandemic and responsibilities passed down to us from central government to be taken without any holdups, by enabling strategic, political and operational decisions to be made.

In the parishes. My attendance has been very low. Only 5 formal parish council meetings 2 virtual and three held outside during daytime. I have however been available to parish council members and to parishioners throughout, with virtual or properly socially distanced daytime meetings and of course telephone and internet media, even a few actual letters. I have visited each parish several times during the year. Some parishes have had more problems than others, but it has been a lively year despite the lockdown.

On other duties. My responsibilities at Breckland are mainly as one of the councillors representing the 15 parishes in Upper Wensum Ward, followed by the appointed cabinet role. This also includes representing the council on a number of other organisations related to my cabinet role. Most of you

will also be aware of my interest in water level management and the drainage board covering this area.

All of this requires some attention on a regular basis, and reporting back to the council. And for all of which I am open for questions from you as well as Breckland.

Throughout this year Breckland Leader, Sam Chapman-Allen has sent all parishes a weekly information letter updating on the pandemic and how this council was dealing with a fast moving situation, It has proved that District councils, with their closer contact to the people do an incredibly efficient job when the chips are down. In Breckland the council has been in contact with as many businesses as we can find from our and others data base records, we have handed out over £40m of central government money, and a number of cash grants and loans from our own funds to help those individuals, families or businesses in distress. We currently have a team of "Covid Wardens" operating in the district helping and advising both the public and traders who interact directly with the public. Mostly of course in the towns, but also coming into our rural communities where the truly local village shops, pubs etc have been a real life saving link for many of us locked down folks over most of the last year.

I do especially thank all of those individuals and organisations within our area whose volunteering was so valuable, and those 'going the extra mile' in the 15 communities of this ward which has meant so much to all of us, and not least to the most vulnerable within our villages.

LOOKING FORWARD

My biggest job outside of the ward has been the NEW WASTE CONTRACT. Several years in the negotiation and the biggest single contract awarded recently, locally, where three councils join to provide a better service and a more cost effective deal for all. This commenced for Breckland on 29th March. I have put this in looking forward as it is the future for how councils work, whatever central government decides on how local government is formulated, and matters are due for a change. This will form a huge part of my work for the wider council going forward.

You will all be aware of the decade long association Breckland has had with South Holland in Lincolnshire, and I believe the only one in the UK with a non-contiguous border. Whilst this ceased on 30th April it does remain one of the longest lasting and most successful amalgamations of councils in the country. In the future, if councils are to be really successful in serving the communities they represent, then similar joint ventures will have to take place, like our Waste Contract. The lessons we learnt with Sth Holland will stand us in good stead going forwards

Attention to littering and fly tipping, again I have laid the groundwork and Breckland is running ahead of the pack in our policy clearing promptly and prosecuting offenders. It will remain a No 1 priority.

The best way for you to contact the council with concerns in the future will be via the website, with common needs, and increasingly this is being set up to report matters with a few clicks, you can also leave photographs as appropriate and it gets complaints to the right people faster.

Some departments, like Planning, Licensing and other legal services of the council now have a 'generic' email, and whilst many of you, like me, hate this sort of approach, it really is the fastest way to get matters dealt with,
BUT - of course parish councillors, and individual constituents, can always contact me direct on any matter, and it can be useful to copy me with your concerns made directly to the council.

I am now half way through my fifth term or representing half the ward on Breckland, and third term for the other half. It is my intention to represent the needs of the ward to the best of my ability going forwards. Part of that will be by attending parish council meetings as often as possible, but I am also willing to be involved in other meetings and events across the 15 villages of Upper Wensum Ward.

Most of you will know that I can be reached on either

07540 973229 or 07788 381761
gordon.bambridge@breckland.gov.uk

My conservative supported blog site will cease on 17th May but
I will be re-activating Facebook as [facebook.com/cllrgordonbambridge](https://www.facebook.com/cllrgordonbambridge)
And twitter is @gordonbambridge

These are all publicly available and can be shared
Gordon Bambridge

County Councillor for Necton & Launditch

Annual Report 2020/21

The whole year has been dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic and the introduction of measures to prevent the spread of the virus. Virtual meetings have been the norm using either MS Teams or Zoom. In the whole year from April '20 to April '21 I have attended only 4 parish council meetings in person which were conducted with strict social distancing measures in place. No committee meetings of the County Council have been held other than by MS Teams during the year.

The majority of NCC staff (around 98%) and all members have been working from home for the entire year. All members of staff were allowed £250 to set up a home office and the laptops provided allowed phone calls to be made via the internet. Staff whose services were necessarily shot down such as libraries, catering, museums etc were redeployed to help with the delivery of the Covid response. Members were allocated a support role to vulnerable residents who were contacted by telephone.

In October 2019, the Council carried out an exercise to test the resilience of the Council to a major incident, all staff were told to work from home for the day to test the IT system and its ability to support remote working. This was mainly to try out the new IT software and hardware but proved to be fortuitous as by the time of the first lockdown any lessons from the exercise had been learned and the transition to working from home in March 2020 was seamless.

Governance: In May 2019, the Council moved from a committee system to an executive form of governance. The Cabinet (Executive) is responsible for the day-to-day decisions in the Council and is made up of the Leader of the Council and 9 other elected members.

The Cabinet is held to account by a Scrutiny Committee, which can review decisions that members wish to debate or question by "calling in" a Cabinet decision that has not yet been implemented. There are 3 Select Committees which were originally formed to recommend policy to Cabinet but recently have had their remit expanded to include a wider scrutiny role. The 3 Select Committees are the Corporate Select Committee, the People and Communities

Select Committee and the Infrastructure and Development Select Committee. All committees are politically balanced (in proportion to the number of seats held by each party) with the Scrutiny Committee chaired by a member of the main opposition group. The following is a brief overview of the work of the Committees.

Scrutiny Committee: the events of the Covid 19 pandemic have brought into focus the important role that the Committee could have in supporting emergency and recovery planning in the Council, feeding into current and future planning regarding lessons learnt. In May 2020, the Committee considered a revised work programme identifying several areas of priority and focus within the Council relating to the pandemic.

Children's Services – return to school; the response from Children's Services has been far reaching and scrutiny has been focussed on the key challenges facing the service.

- Support for education settings
- Children's social care
- Children with special educational needs and disabilities
- School attendance and vulnerable children

Support for shielded and vulnerable people; this has been a key area of scrutiny for the Committee considering a wide range of areas such as:

- Social care
- Safeguarding
- Delivering essential support and supplies to those to those in need
- Hospital discharges
- Residential care

Norfolk Economy and support for businesses; the economy of Norfolk, as with the rest of the country, has been severely affected by the pandemic. The Committee focused on the immediate impact of the support offered by the Council and the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (NALEP) put in place to support the economy and local employment.

Councils' internal processes: The Committee considered the Councils own internal support processes particularly around IT support for staff working remotely and ensuring the Council maintained open and transparent decision making in virtual committee meetings.

Wider Scrutiny Activities:

Strategic and Financial Planning; the Committee has an important role in holding the executive to account especially in financial and strategic planning. The Committee has had regular updates throughout the year recognising that financial scrutiny needs to be ongoing rather than happening late in the budget setting process.

Early Childhood and Family Service (ECFS): in January 2019, the County Council decided to transform Norfolk's offer for families with children aged 0-5 with as significant amount of work undertaken to secure the new ECFS. The ECFS was launched in October 2019 and the Committee have monitored the impact of the new service and will continue to do so through its Children's Services Scrutiny Sub Committee.

Response to the December 2020 Flooding Event; in 2020 Norfolk was hit by a major flooding event in December. The Committee were keen to ensure that those residents who had suffered hardship were made aware of sources of support and information that was available to them. Investigation of the December flooding is still ongoing. A previous event in August was investigated and report issued. As a result of the 2 events causing widespread damage the Council have formed Norfolk Flood Alliance to coordinate the response of stakeholders to flooding events and to formulate measures to prevent further major occurrences.

Corporate Select Committee: The Committee usually meets 6 times a year but the meeting for May 2020 was missed due to pandemic restrictions.

Strategies and Policies; the Committee has the key role of developing and reviewing the Councils strategies and policies. The following major policies and strategies were shaped by the Committee during the year.

- **Norfolk Digital Strategy:** The strategy roadmap explains how the Council will continue to build on past and current successes to improve connectivity in Norfolk. The Council were awarded Connected Britain digital council of the Year 2020.
- **NCC Customer Experience Strategy 2021-26:** The Committee supported and shaped the strategy and on 15th March 2021 recommended the Strategy and a Customer Charter to Cabinet
- **NCC Performance Management Framework:** The Committee shaped the new framework which aligns Cabinet outcomes and departmental objectives with the corporate plan "Together, for Norfolk".
- **NCC Recruitment:** The Committee has agreed the key priorities for recruitment to Council posts including a targeted approach with campaigns, reaching out to underrepresented groups, reducing the time to hire and improving the internal recruitment process.
- **Review of the Councils Constitution:** The Committee has been overseeing a fundamental review of the Councils constitution including the Members Code of Conduct. The revised constitution was presented to Council in April '21.
- **The business and Smarter Working:** this programme was established to drive forward a range of plans and activities to modernise the Council, drive efficiencies and implement new ways of working making the best use of technology. Covid accelerated some of these changes with the roll-out of remote working to over 6000 staff by March 2020.

Infrastructure and Development Committee: the Select Committee contributed to the development of the following new and existing policies and strategies.

- **Enforcement Policy:** the enforcement policy has been developed into a framework for a number of services to ensure that when

undertaking regulatory activities and law enforcement the work is carried out in an equitable and consistent manner across all departments.

- Environmental Policy: This policy set out sets out the areas that the Council sees as key to protecting and maintaining the health of Norfolk's distinctive environment and its occupants. One year after it was approved by Council the Committee reviewed the progress to date in delivering the objectives of the policy.
- Local Flood Risk Strategy: since this strategy was first written 5 years ago Norfolk has experienced some extreme weather events, there has been significant growth and development and the legislative landscape has changed. A review of the policy was carried out to ensure it remained consistent and relevant.

Additionally, the Committee a number of discussion and update papers were brought to the Committee including: -

- The Norfolk Economy
- Performance of key highway contracts
- Performance of the highway network
- Waste disposal
- Library and Information Service
- Rights of Way Improvement
- Budget planning
- Policy and Strategy Framework annual review

People and Communities Committee: The Select Committee played a role in the development and shaping of the following new strategies and policies: -

- Adult Social Services Winter Resilience Planning: The Committee supported the emerging winter planning by asking for focus on the work of unpaid carers, ensuring mechanisms were in place to accept feedback from frontline staff about lessons learnt during the first wave of the pandemic and raised concern around the testing of home carers.
- SEND Educational Needs Improvement Planning: The Committee provided oversight to the development of specific action planning

following the inspection of services for children with Special Educational Needs in early 2020.

The Select Committee also reviewed the following existing strategy to ensure it remained fit for purpose:

- Children's Services Transformation Programme: The Committee commented on the specific new ways of working and changes of approach highlighted to help steer the direction of the work. This included particular focus on emerging proposals for support for children with disabilities.

To support the Select Committee in carrying out its activities, and to support all Select Committee Members with a good background of the relevant services a number of discussion and update papers were also brought to Committee, including: -

- Educational achievement of boys – Report
- Children and young people's mental health transformation
- Special educational needs performance framework report
- Quarterly children's services report
- Cares charter progress report
- Post 16 education
- Covid 19 experience in care homes

Your County Councillor: During the year I have continued to attend meetings of the 18 parish councils in my division of Necton and Launditch, although between March 2020 and this March I have only attended 4 in person parish council meetings the remainder being held virtually under the coronavirus regulations.

The absence of a highway engineer and other staff shortages in the local highways office over the winter severely hampered any but the most urgent highway defects being addressed. I am happy to say that the new engineer is doing a sterling job in reducing the backlog of work.

There were 2 major flooding events in the division one in August and the other in Christmas Eve. At my request both have been investigated by the Local Lead Flood Authority. The County Council has set up a Norfolk Flood Alliance chaired by Lord Dannatt. The priority will be to set up a single point of contact for the reporting of serious flooding events. The forum will coordinate the responses of the 36 flood risk management authorities in Norfolk.

Of the committees mentioned above I am member of the Infrastructure and Development Committee and have sat as a substitute on the Corporate Select Committee.

I am chairman of the Council's Standard Committee and have recently reviewed the members Code of Conduct and other parts of the Councils constitution relevant to members conduct. This will implement the recommendations from the Committee on Standards in Public Life and the new LGA model code of conduct.

I have also been elected to chair the Norfolk Community Safety Scrutiny Sub Panel which was set up to be a critical friend on the progress of the Community Safety Partnership Plan. The sub-committee meets regularly and reports directly to the main Scrutiny Committee.

Mark Kiddle-Morris

Member for Necton and Launditch

Norfolk County Council.

May 1st 2021