

Sudborough Parish Council

Chairman's report to Annual Parish Meeting on 17 May 2023

As another year comes round, I would like to start this review of the past 12 months by thanking my fellow parish councillors – Jacqui Colbourne, Iain Brown, Simon Forde and Ronnie Allison – for their service to the residents of the village during the year. It's a privilege to be a parish councillor and it's rewarding but at the same time it is an unpaid role and does involve quite a bit of effort and inconvenience.

The Parish Council has a number of roles and one of them which has come to the fore in the past year is to help foster community cohesion and good neighbourliness. There have been two perfect opportunities for us to play our part in this, in each case alongside the village Church and the Village Hall. First, there was the celebration of the late Queen's Jubilee last June which was marked by a wonderful party, hosted by the Parish Council, in Simon and Vickie's field by Harper's Brook. Everyone in the village was invited and there was a huge turn-out on a bright, sunny day. Second, there was the celebration just 10 days ago of King Charles III's Coronation. This took the form of a classic street party, held in front of the pub and the Church with that section of Main Street closed to traffic for most of the day. Again hosted by the Parish Council, everyone in the village was invited and this time there was an even better turn-out on an even brighter and sunnier day. Our thanks go to everyone involved in the organisation of both these events and to all the people who helped in one way or another to make them such a great success. It was heartening to hear so many residents saying how much they enjoyed themselves and in some cases how they had had the pleasure of talking to other residents they had never previously met.

In the same vein, the Parish Council - again alongside the Church and Village Hall - contributed to the village's Christmas celebrations, buying presents for all the younger children which were given to them by Santa at the Christmas party held in the village hall.

As part of the village's Volunteers Day in March, the Parish Council organised a litter pick. 17 residents took part and more than 20 bags of litter were collected as well as other bits of rubbish and grot. It has to be said, though, that hardly anything was picked up in the village; the vast majority was lifted from the verges and hedges adjacent to the A6116.

A more functional role of the Parish Council is to provide information and services to residents, including acting as a mouthpiece for the village in its dealings with the North Northamptonshire Council. We review and comment on local planning applications – not merely applications in the parish itself but also applications beyond the parish boundaries which are likely to affect people from the village as they go about their daily lives. With applications for development within the village, particularly those within the conservation area, we always try to strike a balance between the need to look after our heritage and the desire to make life better for house-owners.

The danger presented by the ever-increasing levels of traffic on the A6116 to residents entering and leaving the village by vehicle, and crossing the road on foot, has pre-occupied the Parish Council for some years now. Moreover, the noise generated by this traffic is an increasingly serious issue for some residents. The further huge increase in traffic that will be experienced once the Cowthick Plantation commercial development comes on stream over the next few years is an additional

concern. Efforts made by the Parish Council through the planning process to force the developer to provide or pay for local road improvements eventually proved to be unsuccessful and so in the past few months we have been focusing our fire on the Local Highway Authority and this will continue. There is also some prospect of the village in the future obtaining a share of the section 106 money which the Cowthick developer is required to pay as a condition of receiving planning permission. That money could be used to augment any local road improvements the Highway Authority can be persuaded to make.

The Parish Council has also in the past year continued its efforts to reduce the risk of flooding in the village and to improve flood resilience for those households most at risk of flooding. This has proved to be a slow process but we have been fortunate in that following the serious flooding in December 2020, the last two winters have been relatively benign. Led by Matthew Hunt, our flood wardens are gradually making progress with this initiative, grant money being obtained in the past 12 months to cover the cost of flood-resilience equipment as well as the cost of work to improve the flow of surface water down Slipton Lane.

During the past year, the Parish Council has prepared a Welcome Pack for new residents and made it available via the Council's website. We hope it is proving useful to our newcomers. Apart from keeping this up to date, we also maintain a number of other less obvious things such as the village's street lighting, the roadside verges, the defibrillator and the dog poo bins.

The Parish Council's finances are in good order. Details for the financial year ended 31 March 2023 will appear on our website shortly.

What could we be doing better? There is always room for improvement. For example, our website could be greatly improved and this is something our Clerk, Adam Fox, is working on in conjunction with our external supplier. As a parish council, our communication with residents could be much better. We are hampered by various restrictions that apply to all local authorities but even so we could be a lot more nimble and communicative. Information we receive from NNC and other external sources could be passed on to our residents much more efficiently.

These are challenges for the coming year and beyond.

I would just like to finish by thanking three people. First, Jacqui Colbourne for leading us as Chairwoman for most of the past two years. Although Jacqui has stepped down from that role, we are pleased that she will be continuing as a councillor, putting her experience and expertise to good use for the benefit of our residents. Second, Iain Brown who has been a councillor for the past two years but is now moving to pastures new. And finally, Adam our Clerk who has looked after us so well over the past 12 months whilst learning his role at the same time.

Robert Dixon

Chairman