

Fressingfield Parish Council Annual Report May 2022 -April 2023

Parish website : [Welcome to Fressingfield \(suffolk.cloud\)](https://www.fressingfield.suffolk.cloud)

Your councillors in 2022-23 are : Di Warne Chair, Nick Stolls Vice Chair, Stuart Bulmer, Hilary Day, Garry Deeks, Tom Lindsay, Nigel Lucker, Trevor Orchard, Rachael Troughton. The clerk is Andy Parris.

This year we said fond farewells to Philip Eastgate who has served the council for many years. We welcomed back Hilary Day and new councillor Stuart Balmer.

The village caretaker is Kathy Tooley and the web manager is Calvin Edwards

We are very grateful to both of them for the tireless work they put in. Kathy has been outstanding in the way she and her husband keep our village clean and tidy. She has also engaged with the young people who are desperately trying to find a reasonable place to “ hang out”. Calvin has combined the parish website with the parish council website. It is now easier to navigate and presented in a more modern way. He keeps the site up to date. Thank you to both of them for their work.

At our first meeting we set up our finance committee; planning committee; drainage working group; speeding working group; roadway group and play area group. We identified a tree warden.

The clerk helpfully presented a schedule for the review of policies which we have adhered to throughout the year and published outcomes. All our policies can be read on the parish website.

Our meetings have followed a systematic approach with the opportunity for members of the public to speak in the public forum; district and county councillors to inform us about issues affecting Mid Suffolk and wider; financial management of the council; follow up and progress on our priorities and projects; response to planning applications; management of council business.

Once again this has been a busy year for the parish council. We altered our schedule of meetings to better manage our time and give us the capacity to work on individual projects. This will be reviewed and dates set for 2023-4 by the new council at the annual general meeting on 16th May 2023. That meeting will also elect a chair, vice chair and establish the committee structure.

We are very grateful to our clerk Andy Parris for the tireless work he has continued to do as the Responsible Finance Officer. He has ensured that our audit has been without hitch and our probity has been impeccable. He has improved our financial recording systems and continues to ensure we act efficiently within our budget. The details about our finances are recorded on the parish website and through the minutes of our meetings.

We raised the precept for 2023-24 taking into account the expected expenditure required for projects in the coming year. For a band D property this meant an increase of 0.31p per month. We appreciate that the cost of living rises are currently very high. However, those living in band A-D housing can receive rebates.

As part of our financial management we have set aside funding to support parish groups and organisations who can apply for grants to support their activities. This year we have funded: The Playing Field Management Committee, Fressingfield Players, The Sports and Social Club, Fressingfield Community Gardeners, The Queens Jubilee Co-ordinating Committee and Fressingfield Archive and

History group. Grants are easy to apply for using a downloadable word document from the parish website. We have also made donations to: The Air Ambulance, Bodderhoppa, RBL Poppy appeal, Suffolk Preservation Society, CAB, East Anglia Children's Hospices and Waveney Foodbank. We welcome suggestions from residents.

A major task we fulfil is that of responding to planning applications. The Parish council does not approve or dismiss planning applications. That is the job of Mid Suffolk Councillors.

We are a consultee, which means we can comment on any planning application and make recommendations which the councillors at Mid Suffolk may or may not take into account. This year we have considered 12 planning applications to date and instigated a query on the erection of a building. These applications ranged from the cutting of trees in the conservation area to replacement windows in listed buildings, to erection of two houses, to change of use of properties. Planning recommendations are recorded in our minutes of planning meetings and available on the parish council website. Anyone wishing to comment on planning applications can do so directly on the Mid Suffolk Planning Portal .

<https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/development-management/application-search-and-comment/>

Every three months I attend a meeting with councillors from Mendham and Metfield with the management of Wakelyns. This is part of the planning conditions imposed by MSDC in response to the recent developments at Wakelyns. The outcome of these meetings is recorded on the parish website. It has to be said that Wakelyns are doing a fantastic job in developing their activities and causing no adverse impact on the immediate area, which is well outside of the village.

Residents are very welcome to attend planning meetings and put forward any views they have about applications. We will listen to your views and may take them into account when considering applications.

We have cemented our relationship with the Playing Field Management Committee. (PFMC) This group (PFMC) has responsibility for the management of the site at the playing fields including the children's play area, the field, the sports and social club , the tennis courts and the roadway to the site.

As a council we have pledged to support the PFMC efforts to improve the facilities and in particular to secure the roadway, which has been deteriorating. We will be contributing to the costs which are built into our budget.

We helped them secure grant funding from Mid Suffolk Council for the play area and have topped this up from parish funds. Recently we bought a new marquee for events and activities at the site.

We were pleased to finally secure the refurbishment of the sewer pipes on Cratfield/Low Road. Working with Anglian Water and Suffolk Highways this project was finalised in August 2022 with the installation of an inner pipe sleeve. Since then there has been a distinct lack of sewage overflow.

We will keep monitoring water egress in the village from highways drains and the sewage system.

At various times during the year residents have raised concerns about large vehicles causing problems on narrow roadways in the parish. We have actively involved our county councillor in this with Suffolk Highways. It has to be said this is an on-going process. We were successful in gaining better signage for Church Street during the drainage works on Low Road. Although there was some inconvenience this did not last long and the outcome has been successful.

A major project for us has been to slow the traffic coming through the village. Details of this are outlined below.

The council aims to help improve the quality of features in the parish and to that end has purchased a new bench for Cratfield Road. It has also ensured that the cemetery is well maintained and is working towards additional seating there.

The council was very pleased to help support the community financially in celebrating the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and that it was a great success. Likewise this year we will be supporting the King's Coronation celebrations.

As chair I have attended a Mid-Suffolk wide meeting with MSDC. This is picking up on a previous initiative for parishes to discuss issues directly with the senior officers and councillors at Mid Suffolk. The first meeting was useful and enabled us to question how mid Suffolk responds to issues in a timely manner. They intend to improve.

Our key projects we have been working on are outlined in the Parish Infrastructure Investment Plan formerly called the village improvement plan, available on our website.

1. **Maintenance of roadway to the playing fields.** Unfortunately the roadway is deteriorating and needs repair. We have had it surveyed and met with Suffolk County Council to determine action to be taken over clearing the ditch. The management of this project falls to our partners The Playing Field Management Committee (PFMC). However, we will help fund this project as it is a village resource. Money raised from the precept and the community infrastructure levy (CIL) will go towards the project. This will not be completed quickly as it involves clearing the ditch and then tackling the road repairs.
2. **Play facilities:** improving the play area. Likewise this too falls under the management of the PFMC. They have engaged a group of local parents to help identify what youngsters would like to have in the play area. Again funding from the precept and CIL will support the project.
3. **Drainage issues across the village.** Working with Anglian Water the village has secured work to alleviate sewage flooding on Cratfield/Low Road. The system has been flushed out and a liner has been installed in the sewage pipe to prevent spills onto the road through manholes. We will continue to monitor this. So far so good. There has been no cost to us other than time in meetings with Highways and Anglian Water.
4. **Road safety and speeding.** We have purchased speed indicator signs. This work has been led by Cllr Orchard supported by Cllr Lindsay. It has required diligent work in moving the signs on a regular circuit and collecting data. Data tells us they are having a positive effect on slowing down driving through the village when they are switched on. We are considering purchasing more devices as well as conventional signs to go round the village to slow traffic. We have gained a county council grant of £4K to go towards the costs but will need to top that up from council funds.

5. **Street lighting.** Lights are now LEDS and efficient. Turn on and off times are set.
6. **Security and safety:** We have been working with residents to draw up an Emergency Plan to outline how we as a parish would respond to an emergency or disaster. This is near completion
7. **Good Neighbours Scheme:** This scheme has been running for a year now and enables those who need help with day to day issues, transport and getting assistance when needed. There is a dedicated phone number 07599 685656
8. **Business, employment and support:** The council is supporting efforts within the community and by the Parochial Church Council (PCC) to refurbish the Old Stables (next to the Fox and Goose). There have been two consultations which suggest that a café would be appreciated and rooms for a variety community use. Once funding has been secured architect drawings can be made. There is still much to do here, particularly in relation to fund-raising which is still in the hands of the PCC- all help welcome. Please contact Nick Stolls by email nstolls.fresspc@gmail.com We are interested in hearing about and possibly promoting other businesses.
9. **Environmental issues and trees:** we have a tree warden who takes note of what is happening with the trees in the parish. They will raise any issues with us which we can pass on to the district council to deal with. We are also consulted about any pruning or felling of trees within the conservation area of the village. Our line is to consider each case in context.
10. **Allotment provision:** Some allotments have been made available on Victoria Terrace. Unfortunately there is now a waiting list. Further sites would be appreciated. The council has promoted this idea but as yet not been called upon to fund it.
11. **Sports and cultural life:** The council worked in partnership with a community group, including the W.I. to celebrate the platinum jubilee. We funded activities. We are open to hearing about other ideas for sporting and other cultural activities. On May 7th we will be supporting the King's Coronation Celebrations. Led by Cllrs Day and Lucker and a group of residents this involves events including: a joint Church and Chapel service; talent show; sports activities; competitions at a big family celebration picnic on the playing field. We are grateful for the support from many individuals and groups in the village who are making this possible.
12. **Youth engagement:** This project has been slow to get underway and is about providing activities for younger residents and to encourage more young people to get involved in village life and with the parish council. We would welcome ideas and help from the community to really get this project underway.
13. **Website renewal.** As stated above we have appointed a website manager and have amalgamated the village and parish council website. We are also hoping to improve our communications with the community which currently relies heavily on 6 Sense. We need to get going on social media. Again help and advice would be welcome. If so, please contact the clerk clerk.fresspc@gmail.com

In addition as a parish council we also support:

The maintenance and repair of various assets: cemetery, bus shelter, benches, phone box, war memorial : most of the work here is contracted out to local businesses organised by our clerk working on behalf of the council. Otherwise work is carried out by the Fressingfield Fairies, a mysterious group of very helpful volunteers. If you would like to be inducted into this merry band, please contact Garry Deeks gdeeks.fresspc@gmail.com

And so to the future.

All councillors are elected as un-contested for the next four years, except for Trevor Orchard who did not stand again. He will though continue to support the work required with the Speed Indicator Devices - thank you. This means we have three vacancies. It would be great to have some new membership. Please talk with us at the Annual Parish Meeting to see what is involved. You don't have to be a genius, just someone with common sense who cares about the parish. There will be training for the new council, and we are ably supported by our clerk. Although we are all individuals with different views and opinions we come to a consensus when decisions need to be taken. This may be unanimous or by majority.

Our priorities remain the same as outlined on the infrastructure plan. However we will be working towards reviewing the Neighbourhood Development Plan within the next two years. With that in mind we would like to carry out a household survey to gain an accurate view of need from residents and their families.

When you come to the APM please come armed with questions for the parish council. There will be the opportunity to leave these with us and we promise to answer them all and publish our answers together with your questions on the parish website after our next full council meeting.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Baptist Church for letting us host the Annual Parish Meeting in their premises and trust that residents will take the opportunity to come along and share in the success of all the Fressingfield groups and clubs.

In conclusion I must thank all our councillors for the outstanding effort they put into this voluntary role. They are representatives from the community and together we have made good progress in achieving improvements for the parish.

If you would like to become a councillor, then please contact the clerk clerk.fresspc@gmail.com

I can vouch that it is a rewarding experience and provides an opportunity to help enhance and improve the quality of life in our parish.

Di Warne

Chair, Fressingfield Parish Council