

Fressingfield Parish Council Annual Report April 2024

Once again 2023-24 has been a busy year.

Members of the council have attended the Village Produce Market and found it very helpful to meet more informally with residents. During the winter months we have also been at the coffee morning held once a month on Tuesdays, at Sancroft Hall.

We were consulted on some thirty plus planning applications. We do not approve or deny planning permission. It is our role to comment on how the plans fit with our Neighbourhood Development Plan and what if any impact an application would have on the parish.

Our main projects are varied and derive from the village plan. This has been rebranded as the Parish Infrastructure Investment Plan (PIIP) to ensure we are aligned with Mid Suffolk District Council. (MSDC)

Our projects have been :

1. We have provided financial support for the new initiative of The Shed- a meeting place for men and women in the parish and beyond to come together to be creative, share skills and good company.
2. We appointed a website manager to update and manage the village website so that activities and events are publicised and celebrated. He has also merged the parish website so that we have a one-stop shop for what is happening in Fressingfield.
3. We have provided financial support to the Playing Field Management to enable them to make improvements on the playing field site and to plan for future developments.
4. We continue to monitor speeding in the village through the use of the speed indicator devices (SIDs) and to deter vehicles from speeding. We have recently invested in two additional SIDs which are solar powered.
5. We paid for and organised repairs to the cemetery following damage to the land and invested in fencing to prevent access by vehicles. We have installed a new bench on Cratfield Road.
6. We took advantage of an offer from MSDC for a cycle repair station. Being a parish which is favoured by cyclists this has already proved to be very worthwhile. It is sited by the defibrillator near the Fox and Goose.
7. We continue to support village groups through giving grants for their projects. We also make donations to national and local bodies. Very recently we donated funds to the school safety group to install yellow lines outside the school.
8. We have just embarked on a review of the Neighbourhood Development Plan. This is necessary as legislation has and continues to change and we need to ensure we are up to date. The first step is to see exactly how legislative changes affect what we have in our plan. This scoping exercise is being carried out by a planning expert who will report back to the council when we will consider our next steps.

In addition we attended and supported Remembrance Day; attended community liaison meetings at Wakelyns.

We also set up a Sustainability Discussion which was attended by some 40 people. Green issues were to the fore and we will be exploring these again throughout 2024. A report of the discussions is on the parish website.

Sadly we lost two former councillors this year- Ian Smith and Phillip Eastgate. Our thoughts are with their families. We have gained Cindy Engel as a new councillor.

This will be the last annual parish meeting for our clerk Andy Parris who is retiring at the end of April. He has given so much skill and experience to the council and we will miss him. We have appointed Steve Blackman Cross as our new clerk who will start on 1st May 2024.

1. The plans are well underway for celebrating the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in June. Our thanks go to the residents' committee which have pulled together to make this happen and in particular to Mary Newton. The council is supporting this with funding and in the acquisition of a new bench to replace the one on Cratfield Road which has collapsed.
2. Our biggest and most demanding project involves the roadway to the sports and social club and the fields. Unfortunately a survey has shown that the roadway is deteriorating and although safe now could deteriorate further and cause problems for all of us. With this in mind we are exploring ways to secure the repairs required. As this is a roadway and a public footpath inevitably there will be lots of procedures to go through with the county council, so we have set up a working group to steer us through the processes. There is no doubt this will cost a considerable amount, but we are confident that funding can be sought from the district council through the community infrastructure levy and other community sources. It will though take time. We will keep you informed of progress as we work our way through the issues. Reports of the roadways repairs group meetings are posted on the parish council website.

You will have noticed that we have increased the precept this year by what appears to be an alarming percentage. This may appear to be untimely given the rise in cost of living. However, do not be deceived by percentages. Houses in different bands will pay, approximately £1-1.90 per month for bands A-D, £2+ for bands E-F and £3+ for bands G-H. Bear in mind that band A-D houses are eligible for rebates. We have done this along with many other parish councils locally in order to progress the projects which have been on hold for too long.

We would like to encourage residents to attend meetings and make their points or raise concerns during the public forum. No doubt some of the agenda items appear rather tedious but are necessary. You are welcome to join the meetings just for the forum or better still stay and listen to how we debate and discuss issues arriving at consensus so decisions can be made.

We think it would be helpful to amalgamate the village/parish website with the parish council website so that the parish council site is part of the parish website. This requires some professional work in bringing the two sites together. Again we will keep you informed of progress. In the meantime don't forget that all meetings' actions and decisions are posted on the parish website and are available for public view.

Sadly we still have vacancies on the council. We would very much like to encourage residents to join us. You don't need any particular skills just care about your community. If you are interested, please contact Andy Parris. clerk.fresspc@gmail.com 01379 586745

I must take this opportunity to thank fellow councillors for the inordinate amount of voluntary work they put into the council. In addition we must all thank our clerk for his professionalism and immense hard work in keeping us properly briefed and ready for us to make well-informed decisions.