

# **OUTWELL PARISH COUNCIL**

## **ANNUAL REPORT – FINANCIAL YEAR 1.4.2024 TO 31.3.2025**

This Annual Report to Councillors and Parishioners is intended to summarise the Council's activities and to provide an insight into future planning. The Report is sub-divided under various headings – as follows: -

### **(a) Council Meetings**

Council meetings have been reasonably well attended by Parish Councillors. Since the Election in 2023 our District/Borough Councillor is Mr H Humphrey and Borough Councillor Mr. Chris Crofts. Both combine Borough Council duties with other elected posts. Councillor Chris Crofts has attended as many of our Parish Council meetings as possible. Unfortunately, B.C. Harry Humphries has been unable to attend meetings for quite a while. District Councillor Mr. Chris Dawson was voted into the Marshland and West Area to serve our Parish. He has had a keen interest on our Parish especially the Safer Crossings, School Parking, The Concrete Railings, and the Secondary School issues that the Council are currently working on. He attends meetings when he can -but does keep the Council informed with updates throughout the month. This last year has had the Borough and County Council much involved with the Devolution of merging Norfolk and Suffolk Counties into one with a serving mayor. Attendance by parishioners has remained spasmodic, only on occasions, when issues affecting specific areas of the village are due for discussion, does the number attending rise above 1 or 2. Councillors continue to take this as a compliment, believing that most parishioners are content with the way in which the Council conducts its affairs.

### **(b) Committees/Representatives on village committee**

The eleven members of the Parish Council have specific responsibilities and report in detail at each Council Meeting.

**Councillors Tara Rust and Georgina Greenwood** have represented the Council as the Liaison officers with **Beaupre Community Primary School**, they take an active interest in school affairs providing a detailed report on the school's activities to Council Meetings. **Councillor's Mr. Dale Boyce, Ms Andrea Alexander and Mrs Jane Sutton** report to the Council on **Cemetery** matters, the Parish Council providing the finance to keep the Cemetery clean and tidy. Nurture are contracted by the Parish Council to maintain the cemetery. **Councillor's Tara Rust and Georgina Greenwood** represents the Council on the **Playing Field and Village Hall Committee**, and their monthly reports enable Councillors, who are Custodian Trustees of the field, to keep abreast of the ongoing fund-raising activities. **Councillor's Dale Boyce, John Watts, Mrs Jill Gooch**, form our **Planning Sub Working Party**, tasked with examining every planning application received from the Borough Council, and making decisions and representations on all planning matters. They are empowered to make decisions in respect of many applications (small extensions, outline planning applications etc) to allow the Clerk to meet Borough Planning deadlines for reply but bring any that may be controversial to the attention of the Full Council before recommendations or representations are made to the Borough Planning Authorities. **Councillor Dale Boyce** is our only member on our **Allotment Sub-Working Party** overseeing allocation of tenancies and conducting an annual inspection. The parish is fortunate that all allotments are occupied.

**Councillor Jane Sutton** is the only member on what is known as our **Village Committee**, she keep's an eye out for any road defects, damaged road signs etc, and the general well being of the village. **Finance Committee consists of Councillor's Donna Semmens and Fred Keer** whom ensure that Council keeps within the budget. The Council has a Village Handyperson to keep the village centre clean and our thanks go to Mr M D Ellington who does small tasks when required and keeps the Council informed of any matters they need to know. **Councillors Mrs Jane Sutton and Tara Rust** are the Council Police liaison Officers.

The Council had two Councillor's resign due to personal reasons, and both positions are to be fulfilled.

### **d). The financial picture**

As of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 Council financial holdings were as follows :\_

**Total :- ..... £43,823.79**

The end of year figures are higher than this time last year, this includes CIL payments, 4 years Vat paid in. Council have steadily curbed their spending and increased the precept by 10% last few years Budgeting and looking at the forecast each month has been necessary. Council is grateful to **Councillor Fred Keer** for ensuring that spending is within the budget.

The Annual Precept for 2024-25 was £25976.50. There were no government grants this year. This assuring the parishioners that the finance committee with the guidance of the clerk continue to manage the finances efficiently. Parish Council annually pay £250.00 to Borough Council for the maintenance and upkeep of the Community Car Park at Townley Close Surgery, and energy costs that keep rising. The Council is grateful to Mrs Emma Bateman who audited the books with great attention.

#### **e). Outwell Parish Council WebSite**

This has become popular with visits. Rob Shaw designed the new website, and he continues to update when the Clerk sends him information. It's a necessary part of the Transparency plan that every Town and Parish Council must have in place to publish their finances and assets. The link is [outwellparishcouncil.co.uk](http://outwellparishcouncil.co.uk).

#### **f). Highway Issues.**

Parish Council have constantly been in contact with NCC highways due to the potholes that have appeared in the village and re- occur. The other issue is speeding in the village. The police do their best to curb speeding.

Parish Council have liaised with NCC Highways, Middle Level commission and County Councillor Chris Dawson to get the unsightly damaged railings in Rectory Road replaced. With an agreement that Parish Council take responsibility of them when they are replaced and CIL money to pay them the work is currently being carried out. Again, with Chris Dawson's enthusiasm and the Highway's working group- the possibility of a safer crossing on both the A1101 and A1122 is getting ever closer.....

#### **g). Amenities in the Village**

The Village of Outwell is a busy village with various shops, public house, post office, hairdressers, St. Clement's Church, Garages, and several businesses. The Village Hall and Playing field is popular with it being run by a management team and they have plans to extend the building. Parish Council endeavours to ensure that the Parishioners enjoy living in the community and their needs are looked after. There is a spirit in the village that when events are put on they are usually well attended. Council wants to ensure that all these amenities thrive, and the growth of the village is not too great that the infrastructure cannot be sustained. The Council in 2023 moved their meetings from the Crown Lodge meeting room to Upwell Village Hall. A new Youth Club has been established in the British Legion in Upwell for the children from both Upwell and Outwell children to attend. The Parish Council re pleased to have supported this venture and will continue.

#### **h). Recreation Ground- Robb's Chase**

This area has had a massive change this last year. It has been cleared of rubbish and vegetation to reveal a very large, grassed expanse. Orchard Trees have been planted with guards. CCTV has been installed and plans revealed for the centre piece and a huge pergola. With CIL money it is hoped that the Roadway- Robbs Chase will be majorly improved for vehicle owners to access.

#### **i). Social media**

The Council are finding other ways to communicate with the local Parish. There are three Outwell Sites that are full of local information, these are used by the Council to give information to the Parishioners on social media.

#### **j). New Cemetery Proposal**

This proposal is very new currently and therefore lots of information is required before going ahead. If Council can, they will endeavour to provide burial places in the village when the current cemetery is full, which although there are no plots available, there are few reserved. Again, this project has not moved much in the last year.

#### **k). OUTWELL ORACLE**

In April/May of 2024, Councillor Donna Semmens and the Clerk got their heads together to produce a quarterly local magazine to be published free of charge to the parishioners. With the help of Councillor Jane Sutton, they contacted local business for them to pay for advertising in the publication. This was successful as was finding contributions from various clubs, societies and amenities in the village to create a 40-page A 5 sized magazine aptly named Outwell Oracle. This is then distributed to households and various shop locations in the village.

This has been a true success- With finances coming in the Oracle is now published on better quality paper and is now increased to 44 pages. It is hoped that the support from local businesses in years to come, will ensure that the local news is read by all those interested.

In 2024- the Clerk produced a new Action plan system for the Councillor's to have the responsibility of getting work carried out and delegate with Council's permission. This has been very successful in getting work completed and an upto date record of progress.

There are some key Councillors who have much drive and aspiration for various projects, and they are being successfully completed. I personally as Clerk would like to thank those that have made my work load a lot easier.

6<sup>th</sup> May 2025..... Parish Clerk

NB. If the Parish Council approves this Report at the A.G.M. on 6.5.25 it is proposed that it is published on the website.