

OUTWELL PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT – FINANCIAL YEAR 1.4.2023 TO 31.3.2024

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. Both Councillors' have attended as many of our Parish Council meetings as possible. 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.

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. CGM 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 all Trustees of the field, to keep abreast of the ongoing fund-raising activities. **Councillors David Murfitt, 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. **Councillors Dale Boyce, David Murfitt and Sarah Arden**, form our **Allotment Sub-Working Party** overseeing allocation of tenancies and conducting an annual inspection. The parish is fortunate that all allotments are occupied until October 2024 apart from a 2-acre area in Langhorn's Lane. **Councillors David Murfitt, Jane Sutton and Sarah Arden** form what is known as our **Village Committee**, they keep 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, David Murfitt 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 did not have an election due to the fact 10 nominations were submitted for Outwell Parish Council. **Mr. David Murfitt** was co opted onto the Council at the May meeting 2023.

d). The financial picture

As of 31st March 2024 Council financial holdings were as follows :_

Total :- £22207

The end of year figures are lower than this time last year, this includes three CIL payments, but Council is owed more CIL money and four years VAT. 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 2023-24 was £21467.00. 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. In 2022 the Council decided the old website needed to be updated and more user friendly. 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.

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 are currently awaiting the results of the Feasibility study that took place October 2023. They are also adding a Trod-on Isle Road to link the newly updated Sluice Bridge to the Boat Basin. The resident's of Outwell are concerned about the condition of the railings in Rectory Road. Council has negotiated with NCC for funding, repairs, and ownership. This project Council hopes to have resolved by end of 2024. Local MP Ms Elizabeth Truss is being involved along with NCC Highways.

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.

h). Recreation Ground- Robb's Chase

After much investigation as to whether a cemetery could be located in the Recreation Ground- Council found the only use this location can have is for recreational purposes. It has been agreed that CIL money that has already been allocated to OPC and grant money will help change this non used field into a community/sensory garden. This is very much in the early stages. OPC looks forward to this area changing and developing as the years go by.

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). Secondary School allocation

A new issue arose last year **due to Secondary School allocation for September 2023. The same has occurred for September 2024**

At least 35 children from both Upwell and Outwell lost out in places at Downham High School and the option given them was the Icen School in Methwold and Kes at King's Lynn.. Several concerns were raised by parents. Councillors Mrs Tara Rust and Mrs Georgina Greenwood along with parents from Upwell joined alliance and formed a group with the support of County Councillor Mr. Chris Dawson to try and fight for places for those that lost out. This is still an ongoing process.

This year- 2024- the Clerk has 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. She is also keeping a log of the hours that she works.

7th May 2022..... Parish Clerk

NB. If the Parish Council approves this Report at the A.G.M. on 7.5.22 it is proposed that it is published on the website.