

Parish Report 2022-23 for Quendon and Rickling

In the Council year 2022-23 we have largely come out of the weird Covid-19 period we've been experiencing - thank God!

Although there are still isolated cases and occasional surges, widespread serious illness affecting hospital admissions and so on has thankfully been much lower this year.

Instead we in the PC have reverted to the old hoary themes dear(?) to parish councils everywhere - Highways, Footpaths, Housing.

On the **Highways** front the focus has been on Cambridge Road. We have had a number of "improvements" to the road layout that have not followed our initial commissioned report, and whilst something has been delivered the initial intention to reduce speeding traffic through the village has not come about. Nevertheless it's now safer to cross the busy road, at least.

The village restarted the Speedwatch team this year as well. This was on the request of the local police force, to get the data indicating that there's still a speeding problem through the village, and thus to provide the police with more reason to stage formal speed traps to reduce unsafe driving. It's safe to say there is still a lot of speeding through the village! One feature recently has been the large surges in heavy lorry traffic (mostly keeping within speed limits but still very loud and intrusive), taking the spoil from the many large construction sites north and south of us into waste sites in Elsenham and Newport.

Many thanks to Ljiljana for running the Speedwatch - it's always open for more volunteers!

The **footways** along Cambridge Road have deteriorated further over the year to a point where at some points they are impassable. This has resulted in continuous pressure on Highways to resolve. The issue is that as these pinch points are outside a 30 mph limit they are much harder and more expensive for highways to fix in a safe manner. We still await resolution but are confident that the worst issues will be addressed in 2023.

Elsewhere, with a wet spring the footpaths remain muddy but are well-used and one of the other perennial concerns of PCs everywhere - dog waste - has not raised its ugly face this year so much.

Heartfelt (and sympathetic!) thanks to Gari for his continued devotion to Highways!

As regards **housing**, we are still awaiting the decision of which submitted sites are going to be approved for development in the Local Plan. This process - Call for Sites - has been hit hard by staff departures at UDC, as well as needing significant change following initial review. Pegasi (who took over from Strutt & Parker in managing Quendon Hall Estate) have submitted two large sites for a total of over 150 rental properties. Their separate decision to pursue permitted development of Bradleys Barn to convert into five small rental properties was frustrating and didn't receive a positive response from residents.

Housing targets remain a political football, but we expect to hear of the decision on Call for Sites within the next few months.

Related to the delayed Local Plan, the Newport Quendon and Rickling **Neighbourhood Plan** is being reexamined to bring it up-to-date. A Neighbourhood Plan that is refreshed and relevant remains a very good bulwark to speculative development in the area.

Many thanks to Phil and Brandon for taking on steerage of the refreshed Plan!

We welcomed a **new vicar** to the parish this year. Rev Pete Allen has brought a liveliness to services and has shown a refreshing interest and effort in joining in village activities at every opportunity.

We had a fortunately not-too-windy and not-too-wet **Platinum Jubilee** picnic on the Green in June 2022, which offered a chance for us all to gather and renew acquaintance following Covid distancing.

Then in October our **Autumn Daze** event got the kids flexing their muscles crushing apples and left the rest of us in a happy autumn haze! Jo Kitcat's mammoth pumpkin stole the show and to him went the famed Q&R Pumpkin Cup!

Finally in December the Cricketers Arms hosted our **Christmas Tree Lights** switch-on. Many thanks to Father Christmas for gracing us with his presence, brought to the pub in a sparkling carriage pulled by the trusty Jim the cob! Rudolf eat your heart out!

Many thanks to Rob and Andy at the pub for their enthusiasm and efforts to make these events successful!

We have tried to enhance **biodiversity** in the village this year. The areas around the village which we have deliberately not had cut through the summer should begin to show some wildflowers and items of interest this year. We have applied for and been awarded some grant money from the UDC Zero Carbon fund to clean up the ponds in the village (with an aim to improve the look but not reduce the attraction to wildlife of the areas).

Thanks go to Paul Wilsher for leading these initiatives and pursuing opportunities!

We had several departures over the year from the **Parish Council**, and thanks go out to them all.

Jennie Sutton brought back regular litter-picks which have kept the village tidy. Her experience and contacts as a councillor elsewhere was always useful

Katherine Nuthall's vision, artistic talent and enthusiasm have been central to lovely displays at the Fountain over the year, and her organising abilities to the fore in setting up Events
Rob Ryder has led our Events team and engaged the school successfully for events and community engagement

And Sally Kitcat - our chair up until May 2022 - thank you so much for your huge effort and huge dedication to the village!

As ever, the experience, knowledge and wisdom of our **Ward Councillors** Neil Hargreaves and Judy Emmanuel have been very helpful through the year in guiding us and bringing a wider perspective to PC meetings - thank you!

I also want to mention someone who doesn't see much exposure but who is key to the running of the Council: our Parish Clerk Keith. Keith's knowledge and sensible advice as well

as unflusterability (word of the year for the OED perhaps?) has helped me and all the Council throughout the year.

Finally many heartfelt thanks to our **current councillors** - Gari, Phil and Ljiljana - for all you do for the village, entirely voluntarily and of your free time - nothing would happen without you and the village relies on you (though it may now know it).

Best regards to all; may summer bring comfortable and beneficent times to the village

Tom Duncan.