

Annual Report from Parish Council Chairman Sally Kitcat.

Well, we can safely say that this has been a year like no other!! Quendon & Rickling are still standing though so thank you to everyone who was there for everyone else. It is lovely to know that the community and neighbours were there when needed.

The Parish Council meetings have continued to be held, but on Zoom - not particularly easy as half the team were not au fait with online meetings or technology and those that were did not have particularly good signal, so the meetings were interesting but at least we know what to do if it ever happens again!

We have had two councillors leave this year, Ted Crow and Ele Stoneham and all we can say is a very big thank you to them both. They will be missed! Jennie Sutton replaced Ele and we are in the process of advertising for a replacement for Ted.

The Neighbourhood Plan Referendum took place on 6 May and was voted in by a large majority, 90.5% with a turnout out of 44.2%. The plan will now carry significant weight in relation to future planning applications.

The precept for 2021/22 has remained the same as we felt everyone had suffered enough without having to worry about paying more tax. It does mean though that we will have to cut back on certain items, but we think we will manage. The precept has not been increased since 2015/16 so it will most likely have to increase next year.

Foxley 2 is almost complete, with all houses sold. The Stonebond contribution monies have paid for the Highways Survey to be undertaken, purchased a cricket cage for the club, a ride on lawn mower for the football pitch, a contribution towards the Bowling Club's new floor and a speaker and lights for events. There are still monies available for people and clubs to apply for.

The Highways Survey, produced by Bruce Bamber from Stuart Michael Associates, has come along in leaps and bounds this year. The detailed drawings are now in the hands of Essex Highways. It was approved at the Local Highways Panel in March so therefore funding will be available during the financial year of 2021/22 for detailed design of the calming measures and funding for the installation of these designs has been reserved.

The 40mph buffer zone is almost complete. One sign has been installed on the north bound but we are waiting for the southbound sign to be installed and the roundels on the road surface to be painted!! Essex Highways have assured us that it is being progressed! Despite the fact these are missing, we have also been assured that the buffer zone is currently enforceable.

The Quendon trees saga is, we believe, now over. The trees have leaves!! Essex Highways paid a new contractor to plant live maple samplings and to maintain them after the previous contractor cut down all the horse chestnut trees by mistake and replaced them with dead samplings.

The football pitch is looking at its best, thanks to Ted Crow and his team. Ted will continue to maintain and run the pitch despite stepping down from the Council. There is a full fixtures list, with teams describing it as the best pitch in the area. It is fully self supporting, so congratulations must be given to all the dedication that has been given to this project. Unfortunately in April, the portacabins, which are used for storage and one as a changing room, were vandalised and this is now in the hands of the police forensics, so hopefully there will be a positive outcome.

The Cricket Pavilion is also looking at its best following a serious restoration project.

The Cricketers Arms is a focal point for the village and what a year they have had. They have done everything possible to ensure that their customers have been kept safe - they have put up beach huts, marquees, heaters and purchased more outside tables, all to accommodate Covid 19 restrictions. We wish them well!

A Wildlife Friendly Village initiative has been set up this year to try and encourage more wildlife to the villages. One of the first things we are doing is to create two wildflower areas at the edge of the village green.

The Events Team have been, unfortunately, rather quiet this year due to all events being cancelled due to the Government restrictions. They managed though to organise an incredibly moving Remembrance Exhibition at the Village Hall, which featured in the local papers and an amazing Christmas lighting display at the Fountain, complete with Puff The Dragon and we have had the culinary delights of Waffle & Co for a couple of evenings outside the Pavilion.

Personally, I would like to thank everyone who contributes to the running of the parish - all of whom play an incredibly important role. The amount of hours that people give to the villages, on a voluntary basis, is really quite amazing! Also a big thank you to Neil Hargreaves, our District Councillor, who makes it so much easier to understand my job as Chair.

Finally I would like to thank my fellow councillors! What a fantastic team they are - the villages couldn't ask for a better one!

May 2021