

## Annual Report 2023-24 Quendon and Rickling PC

The year began with a lovely **Coronation picnic** on the Green. Whilst the first week of May was a bit early for reliable weather, hardy villagers came along and joined the celebrations for the new King. Thanks to new councillor Sue Joannou for putting in so much effort organising events in the year, beginning with this one!

The summer was largely a washout. Nevertheless the cricket teams had a reasonable season and as ever it's a delight to many residents to see good cricket being played on the Green. Three teams - Rickling Ramblers, Rickling Development XI and Dell Boys - call the Green their home ground.

The Bowls club similarly hosted a good number of matches over the summer, producing a very respectable record, promoted in two of their leagues and securely placed in the new league.

The Football field has seen another active fun-filled season. Several teams - both senior and junior, from four clubs - call Rickling Green their home ground, and in total 90 matches were played over the year. Ted Crow and his team have kept the ground in perfect condition and I know it's appreciated by the teams who play here.

A First Aid course was run by the PC in August, well-attended and well-received. This was partly in anticipation of the **Parish Boundary Walk** organised by Ljiljana Ortolja-Baird and Rob Timmins of Maces Farm.

The walk was a highlight of the summer for the 20 or so participants, allowing the group access to areas of Quendon Estate not open to the public, as well as introducing some to publicly accessible areas they simply hadn't been to before. Let's hope we can arrange another one in the future!

Throughout the year the **Speedwatch** team recorded persistent speeding along Cambridge Road - no change there! However it looks like there's a new focus from Essex Police which may have an effect soon. Thanks to Gari, Ray, Ljiljana and the rest of the team for persevering in most weathers to drive speeding down to safe levels.

Phil Sowter and Brandon Chapman have been steering the refresh of the **Neighbourhood Plan** all through this year. They and the wider Steering group have done a great job, with the professional help of the consultants O'Neill Homer. The refreshed NhP is out for consultation and has regained the weight it lost as the development sites previously identified were built on. Many thanks to Phil and Brandon for all their hard work in this project.

Gari Spearpoint has been tireless in his pursuit of Highways to make the footpath accessible along **Cambridge Road**. A large measure of success was chalked up in February when the overgrowth was taken back, with a promised resurface of the footpath to come in 2024.

We held our customary **Autumn Daze** event on the Green in October, the highlight of which was the award of the Pumpkin Cup to a new recipient, Os Osbourne, as the grower of the heaviest pumpkin. We saw quite a wide range of specimens from the village, carefully weighed and judged by Katherine Nuthall - thanks for all the hard work, Katherine, it was fun!

Then towards the end of the year we held our **Christmas Tree** lights switch-on ceremony. Father Christmas was brought in on his sparkling sleigh by Jim the Cob, ably driven by Sue Duncan, to the tune of the Bishops Stortford Brass Band. I can tell you that given how cold it was it wasn't just their Band that was Brass that evening! Thanks to Sue and Jonathan Webb for their expertise and preparedness to join in, as well as thanks to the Cricketers Arms for hosting the event and providing the sound system. The pub has had a very busy year under the hand of Andy Macnaughton, Gemma and the team - well done for making it such a valuable asset!

Since Christmas the looming prospect of a development on land at **Belchams Lane** has come closer. Pegasi, the land agents for Quendon Estates, have presented their plans for 110 properties and are pressing ahead against significant local opposition. We have engaged the planning consultants from the NhP to help us with responding to any planning application later in 2024.

The **Village Hall** has free WiFi on offer to users now, which has been set up and delivered free-of-charge by Gigaclear for another year. The Village Hall Committee has begun a programme of works to improve the state and facilities in the Hall, which we on the PC are very happy to support.

Our **Ward Councillors** Neil Hargreaves and Judy Emanuel have provided a stream of information from UDC and have driven the Neighbourhood Plan refresh. As ever they have provided very useful advice and information to the PC through the year - many thanks!

Many thanks too to Keith, the **Parish Clerk**, for his dedication to the village and the job. He's a great repository of knowledge and manages to sift the chaff of our meetings very successfully to extract the important points for minutes, magically!

We said *au revoir* to Katherine Nuthall, Jennie Sutton, Ljiljana Ortija-Baird and Phil Sowter as councillors over the year. All three have had a significant impact on events and administration in the village and we offer them our thanks for all the effort put in.

I'd like to end by stating my unstinting admiration of our group of current **Councillors**, new faces Caroline Mackrill and Sue Joannou, and existing councillors Phil Sowter and Gari Spearpoint. It's only thanks to you that anything gets done here, and thanks for your dedication and cheerful contributions through the year, making PC meetings fun to chair!

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