

MORSTON PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman's Annual Report, 17th May 2023

We have had another quietly successful year. We welcomed new council member, Matthew Harrison to the team at our Annual Parish Council Meeting on 22nd May 2022. We have held the usual ten meetings during the year and I would like to recognise the work of all members and the continuing work and guidance of our clerk during the year. We have regularly shared our meetings with members of our public, showing a healthy interest in parish affairs and I thank all those who turn out to see what we are doing.

The significant review of the Village Hall and Caravan Site, for the next fifteen years, including site surveys and consultation with the current tenants was finally completed by Jill Tibbetts and myself and this year's occupancy will be covered by the new terms and conditions. The current waiting list continues to exist but any replacement take-up is on indefinite hold, as part of a longer term agreement to reduce caravan numbers and re-balance space between village hall and caravans.

Redevelopment of toilet facilities at Morston Quay continues to be a frustration. The National Trust's planning permission for temporary toilets expires this summer without replacements seeming any nearer being delivered. This will certainly be the subject of much more heated discussion but we should remember that if the Trust had not taken the toilets over, the NNDC were intending to simply close them which would have been even worse than what we have now.

Under Planning, a direct access from the marsh to the boatyard was approved and a renewed proposal for a storage site in the neighbouring parish of Langham was rejected. The application for major re-development of the Garden of Eden was re-submitted and again withdrawn. The Parish Council view remains that proposals significantly over-develop the sensitive site and need to address several issues with the NNDC's Conservation Area Management Plan.

We undertook a study of street lighting, with the objective of highlighting the western approach to the 30mph limit area and general safety in the central part of the village. Three new lights have been ordered but we currently await confirmation of the feasibility of one on the electricity pole next to Point House.

After years of discussion and work carried out by approved contractors, the Parish Council has given financial and other support to a stand-alone group of

very enthusiastic parishioners who have established SWAMP, with the objective of improving the pond in Langham Road. It is hoped that continuous, in house tending and expertise will succeed where previous attempts have not.

Our finances continue to be well managed and robust, with an increase in our Year End Balance, from last year's £119.7k to £129.1k and more than 3 times the figure of £38.2k when I wrote my first Annual Report in May 2013. Much of this will be needed for projects like street lighting, caravan site re-organisation and potential maintenance of Quay Lane but clearly shows Morston Parish to be well funded and able to take on worthwhile projects that benefit all parishioners. We continue to take a Zero Precept from Parishioners' Council Tax Payments. We commissioned an outside review of our insurance cover leading to some appropriate updating of procedures.

Morston Parish Council has functioned well during the past year and I am confident that this will continue.

I therefore have mixed feelings when I consider the fact that this is where my own journey as a member of Morston Parish Council, which started in May 1999 and has included eleven and a half years as Chairman, comes to an end. There was some discussion at last year's election of a Chairman about my willingness to continue as chair but ultimately I signed up for one last year, the end of which coincided with the recent election, by which time I expected to have had enough and stand down. An incorrect assessment of health pressures at home, combined with a rather British "stiff upper lip" resulted in my submitting candidate forms on the last day possible only for those pressures to escalate and leaving me dreading the result of the election. I thank the voters for getting it right and am relieved to be free to concentrate on what needs my time and effort the most.

It has, however, been an enjoyable and rewarding journey and a huge surprise to find myself in a role that I would normally seek to avoid. I have met and worked with lot of people and I thank every one for their help and support, including members of the council and excellent vice-chairs. I must especially thank our Clerk, Peter Bullimore for always being there with wisdom, reassurance and friendly advice. Without him I could not and would not have continued as Chairman for the first year, let alone for eleven and a half years.

People regularly say that Parish Councils don't do much but we know that what we do do makes a difference. I sincerely thank Morston Parishioners and everyone involved with Morston Parish Council for letting me do it for you and with them for as long as I could.