

Woodborough Parish Annual Report April 2021

Chairman's Report – Cllr Pat Woodfield

Woodborough continues to be a thriving and vibrant village, despite the Coronavirus COVID-19 restrictions and limitations that we have experienced over the last year. I am grateful to be part of this pro-active Parish Council which is supported by the professional abilities of Averil Marczak, our Parish Clerk. I would like to thank all of our Parish Councillors for their complete support over the last year, and in particular Andrew Gough and John Charles-Jones who have deputised and helped me with my duties. This year has provided a wide range of challenges, some of which have been unprecedented and we have responded to, and risen to, these as opportunities. Our meetings have been held using Zoom technology and this has enabled us to continue in our endeavours as a Council, whilst ensuring that our meetings continue to be open to everyone.

Our village continues to be well-maintained, and the fields, footpaths, playing fields are well-tended. Last year we changed the way in which our grass-cutting costs are shared by the sports teams to ensure that it is equitable and, despite periods of time when the teams were unable to get together, our village facilities continue to be well-maintained. We have provided bags on bins for dog owners to ensure that they pick up and remove any deposits left by their pets. We were determined to ensure that the Governor's Field, our play area, remained open and we are grateful to the many volunteers who have ensured that equipment is maintained, cleaned and made safe throughout the pandemic and we continue to open and close the facility each day. At Christmas we had a Christmas Tree and lights in the trees, which provided a festive greeting to those who travelled through the village.

Our green spaces and cemeteries have been maintained to a high standard throughout. We have a good understanding of maintenance matters throughout the village and we continue to have funding for, and the support of, our Lengthsman who keeps our village clean and tidy.

We have followed Government guidelines regarding opening our facilities, and the Village Hall has continued to be available for Preschool which was enabling education for children of key workers initially and subsequently for all. The Car Park has been resurfaced, which has proven to be a vast improvement and we have plans to replace flooring in the Hall in May 2021. Flooding continues to provide challenges, and particular thanks go to the volunteers and Councillors who go out in all weathers to ensure that our risks are minimised and water is managed as far as practicable. Whilst we do not have any direct responsibilities for flooding, we have continued to work with the Environment Agency and volunteer groups to look at possible mitigation schemes.

We have ensured that our footpaths have remained open this year – and they have been well used by many every day. The Sam Middup Field continues to be farmed by our tenant farmer, which is an interim arrangement until future plans are developed and we have opened a permissive footpath around part of the field which provides a link to other footpaths in the parish. Seating around the village continues to be upgraded and maintained, and we also continue to support the Woodborough In Bloom team. We invited a representative from Via along to one of our meetings and have had some success with repairs to road surfacing, and we continue to lobby for improvements to road surfaces and pavements throughout the village.

We were saddened to hear of the deaths of 2 distinguished former parish councillors. Geoff Parkinson was a former Chairman and John Boot a former Gedling Borough Councillor. Both men

made a significant contribution to the village through their councillor roles, and we send our condolences to their families and friends.

We continue to work to ensure that everyone stays safe and our employees are able to continue either working from home, or in isolation, and are all working safely. Thank you.

Flooding Report – Cllr Margaret Briggs

We had a very wet end of December and beginning of the year. We had a few ‘near misses’ of Woodorough village being flooded. On January 28th the flood wardens had to shut Main Street from Bank Hill to the Four Bells as the road was flooded. Once a road has been closed by the flood wardens, due to flooding, it cannot be opened again until it has been cleaned, checked and the closed signs taken down by Notts CC or Gedling BC.

I want to again register thanks to all the flood wardens for turning out in very wet, challenging conditions. A few new volunteers have joined our team this year. Thank you to Helen Greensmith (district councillor) for providing funds to buy jackets for them.

We await a report from a consultant, funded by the Environment Agency, to deliver some suggestions and costings for flood alleviation in the village.

I’d like also thank Amanda Mellor for her efforts in trying to raise awareness and secure funds to help flood alleviation in the village.

Village Hall & Village Maintenance Report – Cllr Charles Wardle

As with everything, the story of the Village hall has been dominated by the restrictions imposed by Covid 19 with all regular bookings being cancelled. The only exception has been the Pre-School which has been operating throughout for the children of key workers.

The consequence of this change is that our normal accuracy of budgeting has taken a hit with the actual income being £ 8,089 against a budget of £26,000. The good news, however, is that most of this shortfall has been covered by grants from various sources.

The big maintenance item this year has been the resurfacing of the car park which has improved the general appearance of the area considerably and was long overdue. This followed repairs to the drains that ran under the car park. Dedicated cycle racking was also added.

The metal effect splash back around the kitchen sink had badly deteriorated and was replaced with far more practical cream tiles. This change was extended right round to the cooker stack for continuity.

We are in the middle of a project to replace the flooring in the Committee Room and the Entrance Hall. This is being combined with the refurbishment of the disabled toilet to bring it in line with the other toilets that have already been done. Tiling has been chosen and the work will be completed in the first week of June.

The contribution made by our village hall caretaker should not go unacknowledged. She has continued to keep it spick and span to her usual high standards, and incorporated a new level of detail in sanitising the main touchpoints in the hall. She has worked with our users to adopt new

routines to help keep the Village Hall Covid safe, although the duty of planning and taking bookings has been somewhat less onerous this year!

We are also very grateful to Tim Tritton our village groundsman who has continued to keep the foliage of the parish under control and to Tom Wiles, our Lengthsman, who continues to wage war against the litter louts, emptying bins, clearing drains, checking the Defibrillators and identifying any other things needing attention. Without the labours of these two gentlemen our village would not be the attractive village we are all so used to. Thank you.

Governors' Field Report – Cllr Colin Starke

Of course, the COVID pandemic has had a big influence on our management of Governors' Field during the last 12 months. Fortunately, the Christmas lights were unaffected, albeit with an innovative virtual switching-on ceremony.

After studying the Government guidelines for the operation of outdoor playgrounds following the first lockdown, we carried out a risk assessment aimed at preventing COVID infection through social contact in the Field. This resulted in the removal of some equipment, extensive signing and a daily cleaning schedule for all frequently contacted hard surfaces. The Field was re-opened in July and has remained open continuously since then, with updates to the signing whenever the Government guidelines changed.

Governors' Field has given great pleasure to many villagers and visitors from neighbouring parishes through a difficult period of time when there have been scant opportunities for outdoor leisure activities. We are proud of this success and extremely grateful to all the volunteers who have helped us make this possible and a big thank you to our visitors for their respect and appreciation of our Field.

Despite some appalling weather and much heavier usage than normal, the play equipment has required little attention other than daily cleaning and weekly safety inspection. The safe surface under one end of the seesaw was repaired recently and a few small potholes in the path filled. Currently, the roundabout requires a partial stripdown to inspect and clean its bearings.

There have been no recorded accidents.

We look forward to being able to return to normal operation by late June.

Sam Middup Field Report – Cllr Daniel Raynor

Over the past year, the Sam Middup field has stood up well in all weathers and the ditch has done its job in removing the volume of rainwater away from the properties along the northern boundary. The field is visited once a month to check if any issues have arisen and if so that they can be resolved as quickly as possible. The field will continue to be used by its current tenant, whose tenancy has recently been renewed. The Parish Council formed a working party to discuss the future use of the field. This has resulted in a LIS bid being submitted to Nottinghamshire County Council for funding to help create a new permissive footpath within the field, in order to connect the field to the existing footpath/bridleway system within the village. This bid was successful and has helped to fund works within the field. These works were completed in March of this year, which has resulted in the Parish Council opening the new permissive footpath on 1st April this year.

Playing Field Report – Cllr Paul Berrisford

Football and cricket had limited seasons due to the lockdowns. Lockdown did create issues with independent groups wanting to use the field, they had to be advised to adhere to lockdown restrictions. As lockdown is easing clubs and exercise groups are looking forward to using the facilities again. The pavilion is continuing to be cleaned, and is kept spick and span by Christine Leafe our village caretaker. Fees for the clubs will remain at current levels in 2021/22.

Allotments Report – Cllr Paul Berrisford

The allotments proved to be a useful refuge and occupation for holders during the lockdown. The gate to the allotments was refurbished and strengthened. Fees for the next year are to stay at the current amount of £32.

Institute Report – Paul Berrisford, in his capacity as trustee

The PC agreed to fund the cleaning of the Institute by village hall caretaker Christine Leafe just before and at the beginning of lockdown, for which the trustees are most grateful. With the advent of lockdown, the trustees decided to give the Institute a thorough spring clean. During this process it was discovered that major repairs were needed. A complete new floor, damp proofing the walls, kitchen units and decoration have been funded by grants from The Samuel Eden trust and the Government's covid help scheme. These repairs are now coming to fruition and the Institute will be opening when lockdown rules permit.

Cemetery Report – Cllr Andrew Gough

Throughout the year we have worked with our contractors to maintain and improve the environment in the cemetery and I hope that you will agree that when you visit the cemetery now, it is, whilst still a country cemetery, a tidy and peaceful environment fit for its purpose. We have also updated the cemetery regulations, these can be seen on the Parish Council website.

Footpaths Report – Cllr Andrew Gough

There are no issues currently with the footpaths, which continue to be used regularly by all, other than since the 'lockdown' period began, there has been significantly more 'dog poo' on all the footpaths in and around Woodborough. We have placed dispensers and poo bags on the bins on the playing field. Please use them. If any issues do arise please report immediately to the PC who will liaise with the County Council to rectify. We are also pleased to report the opening of a Permissive Footpath on the Sam Middup's Field which has been well received by the village

Planning Report – Averil Marczak (Clerk)

In the past year we have considered 35 planning applications, some 13 of which related to TPOs or TCAs (trees in the conservation area). The PC is pleased that Gedling are inviting its views on TCA applications.

The majority of planning applications considered have been for modest home extensions. GBC have refused permission for a handful of larger extensions to which the PC objected, on the grounds that

the proposal would overdevelop the site and be out of keeping with the character of the area. A proposal for 9 new dwellings on land off Shelt Hill was refused by GBC, but is now the subject of an appeal.

A dedicated meeting to consider plans to expand Timmermans and diversify its business was held in January. A Survey Monkey questionnaire was used to gather views in the absence of the opportunity to hold a public meeting. There was wide support for the plan and the jobs and opportunities it would bring to the village, but concerns were raised about road safety. It is hoped that measures will be taken to ensure that traffic can move safely and unhindered near the site and at the junction with the Epperstone Bypass.

A Planning White Paper was published in the autumn, to which the PC responded. We await the next steps.

Finance Report – Averil Marczak (Clerk)

Our receipts exceeded payments by £6,783 in a year profoundly affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

Our Village Hall income fell by 70% as most bookings were cancelled. We have kept the hall open and running as we continued to host the Preschool for the full year. For the weeks in which Preschool could only open its doors to the children of keyworkers, the Parish Council agreed that no fees should be charged. Intermittently – as restrictions ebbed and flowed - we have welcomed back the children’s groups and exercise classes, and we have been pleased to host some new groups. Some of our regular users have not been able, or have chosen not, to meet at all. We have been able to secure Covid-19 business grants from Gedling to the value of £15,418 to help meet our shortfall.

We successfully applied for a £4,000 grant from Nottinghamshire County Council’s LIS to part fund the new permissive footpath and we continue to benefit from the County Council’s scheme which part funds our fantastic lengthsman. We are grateful to GBC Cllr Helen Greensmith and NCC Cllr Boyd Elliott who regularly support our activities with grant funding.

Our highest value project this year was the resurfacing of the Village Hall car park. Long discussed and finally budgeted, the quietness of 2020 provided an ideal time to undertake this major and disruptive task. The cost, including the lining, was £20,650.

The cost of the new permissive footpath on the Sam Middup Field was £5,366 and this was part funded by a grant of £4,000. The balance of the loan, which was taken out to purchase the Sam Middup Field, is £2079,365. Our loan repayment to the Public Works Loan Board remains constant at £8,536 per year.

Staff pension costs have risen by nearly £2,000 due to an increased contribution rate required by the Nottinghamshire County Council Local Government Pension Scheme. We also invested in a new computer for the Clerk this year, as the old machine started to become unreliable.

We have incurred some new costs as we took measures against Covid-19 across our facilities. These include: hand sanitiser units, blue nitrile gloves, a range of disinfectant cleaning products deployed at the Governors’ Field on a daily basis, a range of large signs in the Village Hall, as well as a subscription to Zoom to enable PC meetings to go ahead.

