

BENEFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday 24th May 2021

588 Ian Tadman gave the following Chairman's report:

Due to Covid, this statement covers 2019 and 2020, in which both years, I was chairman. Whilst Covid has disrupted peoples' everyday lives since March 2020, it has affected the Parish council in a couple of areas (f2f meetings and f2f discussions with residents). Once we are allowed to get back to normality, face to face meetings can resume and councillors can start to revisit residents. The Parish council continued to have meetings using Zoom calls, where technology allowed.

We hired the Vehicle activated sign (VAS) from Deene & Deenethorpe Parish Council and placed it in 3 locations in Upper and 1 in Lower. This is something that the residents like to see and we will continue to look at ways to purchase a unit for ourselves. Upper has a number of suitable location posts while Lower is lacking posts to hang the device from and this would need to be taken into consideration when we use it again. We have been asked not to put the VAS on the timber telegraph poles.

Pathfinder II provided us a grant, which allowed us to purchase a flood barrier for one of the houses along the gated road. We also purchased flood signs, which we have had to deploy on a number of occasions. The clearing out of silt from under the bridge in Lower was also paid for from the grant. Whilst we only engaged with Pathfinder II for the grant, it also has other elements that as a parish we decided not to get involved with, Emergency planning being one. Following the pandemic, this may be something that the Parish council may wish to revisit. I would like to say a big thank you to the people that helped out other residents with shopping, errands, etc. During the heavy rain, just before Xmas last year, it was also nice to see a group of Lower Benefield residents help clear out a blocked drain, diverting the water from entering a property on the gated road.

A good-sized volunteer working party cleared under the trees as you leave Upper towards Corby. Stumps were also removed, to allow the grass cutting contractor to cut under the trees. We have received very positive feedback from residents and I would like to say 'well done and thank you' to all who played a part.

We communicated with the authorities and Deenethorpe Parish Council regarding the encampment that appeared in the Chippings layby on the Deenethorpe road. Due to the COVID travel restrictions the removal of the encampment took a lot longer than expected.

As a Parish Council, we sometimes need to communicate with East Northants Council's planning enforcement team, regarding possible non-compliance in the villages. This last year, due to COVID restrictions the ENC planning enforcement team have not supported the Parish council or residents from the villages in a way their policies suggest they should. I have escalated the matter and they have now started to work through the backlog of enforcement issues.

As a parish council we continued to provide feedback to numerous planning applications, but without a neighbourhood (village) Plan, these comments were not always consistent, it would have been easier to quote statements from a plan.

Over the last 4 years we have managed to complete the renewal of all the street lights in both villages to the new LED low powered units. Over the next year we should start seeing the savings.

Due to an issue with the grass cutting in 2020, we asked for new quotes from a number of grass cutting contractors, for 2021. We have awarded the 2021 contract to a new company and we have asked for 8 cuts this year. New for 2021, we have awarded a litter picking contract and we have asked for 4 picks this year.

Another item that needs noting is, for the people who use the footpaths along the sides of the fields in the lovely countryside, the grass cutting will have been done by either the farmer or by Alf Pridmore with one of his classic tractors.

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Not all has been positive, we failed to get interest in creating a neighbourhood (village) plan, we also failed to get additional parking at Townsend Court/Coronation Crescent and not forgetting improving the village entrance gates to Lower Benefield.

Finally, I would like to say thank you to the Parish Councillors, who dedicate their time to attend meetings and especially to the councillors that have taken on tasks/activities during the year, all of which is unpaid of course.

589 With no questions being raised the meeting was closed at 6:35 p.m.

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