

## Chairman's Report

June 2020

Looking back to July 2019; on the 12<sup>th</sup> we held our last Community Café Event, a Pimms and Mocktails evening plus a fish and chip supper supplied by the Chequers. Andy Moore gave another history talk about the Downham Market aerodrome during WW2. This was a continuation from the previous November's 100 years Beacon Lighting Ceremony to commemorate the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> WW.

The NVHWG were on hand too and able to update everyone who attended with the results from the Villagers and User Questionnaire they had carried out over the previous months. More about the NVHWG later.

In November 2019 the Parish Council received resignations from the Chairman, William Esse and Lady Rose from the Village Hall Committee. They effectively handed the Hall back to the Parish Council for us to resurrect a new management committee. Thankfully we were able to do this with Cllrs stepping up to take on the trustee roles and a new committee member to take on the bookings for the Hall.

Ongoing is the writing of an updated trust document for the Hall. This will set out how a management committee should run the hall and what role the PC's has in this, bearing in mind the PC owns the Hall. Our Clerk will be chasing up the solicitor working on this.

Alongside management of our village hall, we have the New Village Hall Working Group doing what their name says. The Parish Council, earlier in the year agreed to fund and instructed Swann Edwards Architects to carry out a Feasibility Study to help understand more about the type and size of the building required to fulfil the needs as highlighted from the Villagers and users questionnaire. The feasibility study will also be looking at possible locations for the siting of a new Village hall. Whilst the village hall is closed and face to face meetings cancelled due to the pandemic the NVHWG has managed to continue to progress. A design brief and statement of need checklist has been constructed, agreed and signed off by the Group and Swan Edwards are now working on the Feasibility Study.

Without exaggeration our community was devastated when on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2019, early in the morning, our treasured Church, St Mary's caught fire. A serious fire that has left the Church hollowed out, with a dangerous belfry and tower still awaiting demolition. This has been a big upset for the community but luckily we have a strong Parochial Church Council (PCC) who are overseeing the future of the church and managing things well. Our vice Chair sent a letter to the Church expressing our sympathy and suggesting the future of the Church could possibly be a joint facility for use by the community.

We have seen the installation of our third trod, at the west end of Westway, joining up with a previous trod. Also the finalisation of the Low Road trod, making the join from field trod to the village hall car park. This 50/50 funding with County Council has proved good for safe access in and out of Wimbotsham for pedestrians. Our village, although quieter at present is a lot busier with cyclists and walkers and our new trods have come into their own and kept families safer when out for their daily exercise during the pandemic.

The last PC face to face meeting was on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2020, where we met as normal. After that and up to today we have all been in lockdown to prevent further spread of the COVID 19 virus, the pandemic that has effected everyone in one way or another. It seems that Wimbotsham has coped well during this time, as a Parish Council we haven't received any requests for help. Many of our residents have good neighbours and or family to shop for them if they are shielded and/or elderly. County and Borough Councils support has been provided to those who request it and householders received information informing them of this.

This actual Zoom meeting means at least we can meet and carryout our obligated duties. Updated standing orders have permitted this style of meeting.

Unfortunately, due to COVID19, some of our village events, of which many were in the planning have had to be cancelled; this includes the Midsummer Fayre and most likely the Village Fete and Fenman Classic Bike Show. And a new event for the village, the Open Gardens, has also been cancelled. Roll on next year when we can see all of these community occasions return to the village.

Still closed is our village hall, primary school, chapel and public house, thus creating a much quieter atmosphere in the village. We're very thankful to our village shop for doing a sterling job keeping open, maintaining social distance and serving a lot more customers during the last 2.5 months, with many customers preferring to shop here than in the larger supermarkets in town.

We have over the lockdown period, produced a newsletter for the village (thank you Ian), our councillors have continued with their representative duties and generally keep an eye on the village, which I thank them for. And thank you to our Clerk for guiding us through the meeting process during the lockdown period.

Jacqueline Squires

June 16<sup>th</sup> 2020