

## **Chairman of Occold Parish Council Annual Report for year to end April 2022**

### **To summarise 2021-22**

#### **Coronavirus**

Coronavirus has continued to affect our residents with restrictions in place until very recently. I would like to say that the support shown by our residents to each other throughout the crisis has been exceptional and I thank you for all your hard work. Let's hope that this is now firmly behind us!

#### **Parish Councillors**

The Council have been very lucky to have a full complement of Councillors for most of this year.

We were extremely fortunate to receive no less than four applications for the post after Cllr Hull's loss and Cllr Dave Griffiths was the lucky recipient, joining the Council in April 2021. He brings a wealth of expertise to the role.

In June there were 3 applicants for the role after the resignation of Cllr Richard Owen and Cllr Tim Weller was co-opted. He has done some really great work since joining the Council. Tim looks after our defibrillator on the wall of the Village Hall and is always willing to volunteer his services for projects and tasks.

Later in the year we again lost a very valuable Councillor – Alison Davenport Jones who moved out of the area. Alison was the instigator of the wildflower seeds that you all received through your letter boxes and I hope they have brought some colour and nature to your life.

We have also received news that Cllr Jill Crouch is imminently moving away and so there will be two further vacancies and I am hopeful that we may have some residents amongst you prepared to take up the mantle.

Jill has been a stalwart at cajoling residents to take up environmental projects and she will be sorely missed.

#### **Highways**

June 2019 saw the Council's first enquiry with Suffolk County Council relating to a safer crossing area for the school. Progress has been extremely slow and Cllr Kevin Chittock has taken the lead on this, regularly reminding the County Councillor of the lack of progress. The safety of our children is paramount.

We have recently received an estimate from the County Council for a preliminary design stage into a new footway from the school to the access to the village hall. This is in the sum of £5,747.42

This would be a preliminary design to see if a scheme is feasible and doesn't guarantee that a solution will be achievable.

The outcome of the preliminary design will allow the County Council to assess the safety hazards and whether these can be overcome and to assess the need for new infrastructure from an asset management perspective. The Parish Council has resolved to contribute £2,000 of CIL funding towards this project and we await their response.

The Council has an active request in to the County Council to join the Lorry Watch scheme after several reports were received of HGV's ignoring the weight restriction and is awaiting further action from them in respect of training and signage. Unfortunately some of the signage has seen better days and will need replacing before we can join the scheme.

The Clerk regularly reports issues with signage/street lights and public footpaths to Suffolk CC when she is made aware of them. Residents are encouraged to report issues themselves at <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/highway-maintenance/report-a-highways-issue/>

We continue to press Suffolk County Council to investigate the flooding problems at the entrance to the Village Hall. The blocked drain has been reported recently and is awaiting action by the County Council.

Thank you to Cllr Stephen Hubner for poring over some very old maps to try and resolve the issue of ownership of the various blocked drains.

### **Quiet Lanes Project**

After consultation with the village, Council submitted an application for 'Quiet Lanes' status for Bulls Hall Road and Redlingfield Road. These have now been approved and were designated on 9 March 2022.

The County Council now needs to erect posts for Councillors to put up the required signage. Thanks to Cllr Andrew Duggett for his work on this project.

### **Neighbourhood Plan**

In September 2019, flyers were distributed to all households to seek volunteers to consider a 'Neighbourhood Plan' and Community Led Housing. This led to a number of meetings and a presentation from Mid Suffolk District Council.

Unfortunately, after a number of volunteers pulled out it was considered not viable.

Some residents have recently indicated a wish to revisit a Neighbourhood Plan and a recent leaflet drop has been completed with a number of residents coming forward. This will be discussed further in the June Parish Council meeting.

### **Speeding**

Speeding is an ongoing concern and the Council continue to operate the Speed indicator device (SID) with Cllr Andrew Duggett taking the lead. The data shows that there is still a speeding problem in the 20mph area.

A new project was launched last year by the County Council inviting all Parishes to take part in an Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) trial where the SID device will display the registration number of the offending vehicle. The scheme is now scheduled to start in July 2022.

### **Village Maintenance**

Two dog waste bins have been installed at Barric Lane near Wingfield House and Church Lane j/w Church Street.

These were provided free of charge by Mid Suffolk District Council but the Parish Council will pay an annual fee for them to be emptied.

### **Planning**

The Council works closely with the District Councillor to oppose controversial and excessive applications which have an adverse effect on the Village. Unfortunately, the Planning Authority at Mid Suffolk ultimately make the decisions on whether planning applications are subsequently approved.

Enforcement continues and the Council has reported several issues which are now being investigated by Mid Suffolk Council.

### **Community Infrastructure Levies (CIL)**

A total of £20,437 of CIL monies has been received from the developer of the properties at Cedars Rise.

Memorial benches to commemorate the lives of Councillor Brian Hull and local resident Tom Rivett have been installed on the Village Green and at the Village Hall at a cost of £1,350.

£7,500 has been donated to ORAC for various projects, and £85 to a wildlife project led by Cllr Alison Davenport Jones.

At last months meeting Councillors agreed a further £3,345 for an additional Speed indicator device and £1,000 to ORAC on completion of driveway repairs.

With the £2,000 offered to the school safety project the Council currently has £5,157 for future projects.

The newly formed Occold Conservation Group instigated by resident Chris Hook already has some great ideas for environment and conservation projects for Occold including wildlife corridors, (joining up existing habitats) opportunities for leasing and rewilding pieces of land, replanting hedgerows at various locations, creating walks with double hedged tracks and seats, improvements to the recreation ground area, foraging walks for Autumn seed collections and Summer plant swops and an Occold/Oakwood Platinum Jubilee project to plant groups of Oak trees around the village.

The Parish Council are fully in support of this group and hope to give some financial support in the coming months.

## Finances

Expenditure/Income for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 was as follows: -

<b>Expenditure</b>		<b>Year End</b>	
Democracy inc training and website	125	Opening balance	11650
Section 137 donations	650	Plus receipts	22119
Overheads	957	Minus expenditure	-13127
Admin	3658		<b>20642</b>
Village maintenance	3275		
CIL	3935		
VAT	527	Bank balance c/f	<b>20642</b>
Total expenditure	<b>13127</b>	(Unity Trust)	
<b>Income</b>			
Precept	8800		
CIL payments	12667		
Grants	304		
Other	348		
Total receipts	<b>22119</b>		

The Budget for 2022/23 was agreed at £9885. The precept was set at £8800, no change from the previous year with £1085 taken from reserves.

Finally, I would like to thank all our Councillors – Kevin Chittock, Stephen Hubner, Michelle Grange, Jill Crouch, Andrew Duggett, Dave Griffiths and Tim Weller for your support of me and the giving up of your precious time for the residents of Occold

Also a big thank you to the volunteers of all the organisations in the Village that make this a great place to live.

I look forward to working with you in the coming year

Colin Cripps, May 2022