

Hemblington Parish Council: *Chairman's Biennial Report, 2019-2021*

This report unusually covers two years, May 2019 -May 2021, the Annual Meeting of the Parish in 2020 having been cancelled as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Up until March 2020 the Council had held its normal meetings at their usual venue but from March 2020 until the present meetings have been successfully held on the 'Zoom' conference platform. Normal meetings will resume from June 2021.

During this two-year period there have been considerable changes in the composition of the Council with the resignation of three councillors (Andrew Burtenshaw, Richard Sargeant, and George Pickersgill). However, it is pleasing to report that four new councillors have been recruited (Jutta Koch, John Applegate, Tim Powley, and Rose Niescierowicz) and that the Council is at full strength, with a good gender balance and coverage of all areas of the parish.

In July 2019 the Council celebrated its fiftieth anniversary, with a series of events including a lecture, held jointly with the Friends of Hemblington Parish Church, delivered by Prof. Tom Williamson, a talk on the History of the Council by the Chairman, an exhibition of local history, opened by the chairman of Broadland District Council, and a service of thanksgiving for the work of the Council held by the Revd Kevin Bilson. The Council would like to thank Susan Rowe for her invaluable help in organising the lecture and exhibition.

Despite the pandemic the normal work of the Council has continued with local planning applications reviewed and comments made on the proposed North Burlingham A47 dualling and the Greater Norwich Development Plan. The Council continues to support the Broadland Tree network and has two tree wardens, Dr John Applegate and Mr Tony Baker. With the onset of the pandemic the Council delivered leaflets to all households offering support for those shielding and otherwise in need, although, as in other small rural parishes, relatively little call was made on its services.

The work of the parish council is supported by the Parish Precept, collected by Broadland District Council. In 2019/20 this amounted to £2826, in 2022/21 to £2854, but will rise to £3300 in 2021-22. In recent years a growing gap between regular expenditure and the precept received has been met from reserves but the Council now feels it the appropriate time to match income to growing fixed annual costs. The Council has also received £17,415 from the Community Infrastructure Levy which is available to fund parish projects. The first of these which will receive funding of £3000 is a new path to be constructed at Hemblington Parish Church. Over the next year the Council will investigate further projects which this money might fund and welcomes suggestions for parishioners. From its normal reserves the Council has also purchased a new noticeboard, and the village sign, despite unavoidable delay, is imminently ready for erection. The Council is also in the process of moving its website administration, having benefitted since the website's inception from the unpaid services of Peter Harvey to whom it wishes to record its warm thanks. The council has made a donation to Acle Foodbank, subscribes to the NALC, and has recently agreed to sign the Armed Forces Covenant.

I would like to thank most sincerely Steven Ford the parish clerk for his efficient support throughout the two-year period but in particular for his sterling work in adapting to the lockdown conditions and keeping the business of the Council running smoothly at a difficult time.

Finally, I would like to thank all the councillors for their support and commitment and I look forward to meeting them again in person in the near future as our 'virtual' existence comes to a welcome end.