**Wetwang Parish Council - Chairman’s Statement 2021**

In writing the annual statement for the year 2020/21 that outlines the activities of the Parish Council over that period, I want to open by paying tribute to everyone in our community. The past year had provided significant challenges to many people and it has been inspiring how villagers have responded in supporting and caring for their neighbours.

The Parish Council played its part in supporting the village throughout the pandemic in several ways.

* The newsletter, “Wetwang Focus” was published five times from March to May providing news and useful information for villagers including contact details for businesses who would deliver to households, particularly those shielding.
* The Council provided contact details and a specific email address to support residents.
* The Council asked for volunteers who would support those shielding by helping with shopping, picking up prescriptions and other tasks. We received responses from twenty people offering their help and we were very grateful for their selfless commitment at a time of great anxiety for many.
* The Council supported Revd. Jacki’s Swap Shop who operated from the Church Lychgate for seven weeks throughout the pandemic. Cavell and I thoroughly enjoyed setting it up every day and were continually astonished by the generosity of villagers and the genuine need it provided.

The Council

The Council could not sit in person from April 2020 to date but in July, September and every subsequent month has conducted a council meeting via MSTeams . As Chair I am very grateful to the councillors who mastered the technology and observed the protocols required to run the meetings.

The council currently has ten councillors and holds one vacancy.

The council was very sorry to hear that Councillor Reena Scrowston passed away and we offered our condolences to her family. Reena and her husband Ted who also passed away during the year were loved and valued members of the community for many years and will be sadly missed. The Council are grateful to their family for the donation of benches at the new playpark on Northfield road and plaques will be placed on each bench in their memory.

Lynne Curtin decided to step down from the council. Lynne has been a valued member of the council and we thank her for her time, outstanding service and commitment to Wetwang.

We also had the pleasure of welcoming Chris Smith to the council and look forward to working with him.

Precept

Following a review of the budget and the requirements of the council to plan effectively, the precept was increased in April. This will allow the council the opportunity to fund new projects whilst meeting its on-going liabilities.

Parish Council Facilities

Northfield Road Playpark

The playpark received planning permission and the work commissioned to create the park space including levelling, new turf and fencing. The equipment was installed in October and welcomed its first young visitors. We thank all the contractors for their commitment to completing the project and hope this facility will be enjoyed by young children and families for years to come.

The park has been paid for in full and the council will only need to make provision for maintenance and replacement equipment in future years.

I wish to make particular mention of Suzanne Taylor, our clerk who was fundamental in bringing this facility to Wetwang, from applying for a Lottery Grant to guiding through the planning process and arranging installation.

The Village Pond

Councillor Dixon has led the project to revitalise the pond over the last three years. The pond has been cleaned on several occasions by volunteers and visitors will note the tree house with the doors, windows and chimney made by Dave Sutton. In addition the council has funded new planters on the railings, a duck food dispenser,a duck house , a new bench and an information board .

The pond railings were painted by people involved in Community payback schemes and the council thank them for doing such a good job.

The Station Hill play park

The lease has only been extended by the Sledmere Estate until 2024 at present so the council resolved not to replace the play equipment which has been removed due to safety concerns.

However, we do want to ensure that it is used, and we worked with the Deep Blue Fish and Chip shop to create a picnic area and the shop have paid for three benches which have been installed. A brown information sign will be placed by the pond to guide visitors to the picnic area.

The football pitch has been re-marked and the lines will be painted to meet the requirements for a Under 10 /walking football pitch. It is the intention to install new goalposts and nets to encourage use.

Spring Bulb planting

The council undertook a project to plant spring bulbs across the village and would like to thank all those who volunteered to help. This initiative was put forward by Reena Scrowston and the council will fund planting in autumn every year in her memory.

Allotments

All the allotments are allocated at present.

Burial Ground

The Council intends to extend the area of the burial ground and this will be under consideration in the next council year.

The council installed a new bench in the burial ground with planters.

The council would like to thank Ray Turpin for mowing the burial ground grass and David Cornwell for cutting the hedge. The upkeep and care of the burial ground does mean so much to many villagers.

Planning Applications

The Council considered and commented on fifteen planning applications during the year.

The principle proposed development is on the area Wet 1 designated “Land South of Southfield Farmhouse “. This is a proposed development of seventy-nine dwellings.

The developer met with the Parish Council to discuss the development plan prior to any submission to ERYC for pre -planning response. The council were pleased to note that the developer responded positively to the councils’ submissions particularly that all vehicle access to the development (with the exception of four properties) will be via a road entrance from Beverley Road. In addition ,all service vehicles will enter the site from Beverley Road during the building process rather than entering the village via Pulham Lane.

The developer also agreed to the councils request to hold a consultation weekend which allowed villagers to consider the plans, question the developer and leave comment which were then submitted to ERYC planning department.

The parish council submitted a detailed response to the application.

War memorial

The War memorial was maintained during the year and new gravel laid around the base.

The council commission a local artist, Sue Nichols, to sculpt a “Ghost Soldier “from wire which is proudly in place by the memorial. It has been admired by all who see it and should remain as a testament to those who came from the village and gave their lives in the wars, for many years to come.

Promoting the village

Under this heading within the Local Government Act 1972 the Parish Council are allowed to fund activities to promote the village.

The council provided funds for the following ;

* Christmas Lights in the Church Yard
* Union Jack flags for all the houses with brackets in Main Street during the VE celebrations
* A contribution to the Parochial Church Council towards the cost of maintaining the clock on St Nicholas Church
* A contribution towards electricity costs for the Defibrillator placed on the Victoria Inn Wall.

Contribution to organisations

The Parish Council contributed during the year to Driffield School to support the running of the Twilight bus; The Council also provided the book token for the Richard Whitely prize that I was pleased to present to the schools most outstanding pupil at the end of the summer term. The Council contributed to the British Legion appeal by purchasing the wreath to be laid at the War memorial.

New Initiatives

The council will have a number of initiatives to undertake during the council year 2021/22 .

* The council purchased the telephone box in Main Street from BT and it will be refurbished and used for the benefit of the village,
* The burial ground extension will need to be assessed and costed.
* The lease on the land owned by Wetwang PC surrounding the Well at the bottom of Station Hill will need to be renegotiated with Sledmere Estates
* The wooded area near Cadger Castle will need assessing for future use.
* The council, as a primary consultee, will need to take a lead on behalf of the community in assessing the development on Wet 1

This will be my last statement as Chair of the Parish Council as I will stand down at the AGM. I believe that it is important that posts are held for a limited period and I had thought to chair for three years but because of the pandemic I sought the agreement of councillors to continue to May 2021. It has been a privilege to serve my community in this role and as a councillor for the last fifteen years.

I would like to thank Suzanne Taylor for her support to us all as Parish Clerk and it is through her work that many initiatives gain momentum. I also want to recognise all the work that the councillors do and the time they give freely to ensure Wetwang continues to be a thriving community.

Andrew McCormack

Chairman Wetwang Parish Council