

CASTON PARISH COUNCIL
Chairman's Annual Report 2017 -2018

During the past year, your council has endeavoured to protect the environment and tradition of Caston against the seemingly relentless pressures of new property developments and increasing traffic volume and size.

During March and April 2017 the Village Appraisal was published and during this council year councillors have been considering items in the report. Several items have proved none viable. The provision of a play park was pursued but no suitable location has as yet been determined. Additionally, the enthusiasm for such a facility was not extensively supported. However, the matter of planning, roads and traffic remains in the forefront of council's concerns.

Change is inevitable but your council seeks to ensure, to its best ability, that developments will suit the street plan and environment of Caston Village. We have enjoyed some success in this regard. However, the vigorous directive from central government to build more housing has put Breckland Council planners under pressure to approve housing developments which has meant that your council has needed to be even more vigilant and proactive in opposing developments council considers are not in the beneficial interest of the village.

The volume and size of traffic using the village's roads have been extensively considered. The council continue to be grateful to Colin Bearne and the "Speedwatch" team for the regular monitoring of speeding vehicles in the village and to the volunteers who monitor and move the speed indicator signs within the village. The council continues to seek ways of controlling speed but the question of enforcement is often a problem as policing resources continue to dwindle. Despite this, the efforts of the "Speedwatch" team have brought the attention of the traffic enforcement team to the speeding problems in Caston with positive results. Our council has also been in discussion with Norfolk County Council regarding the installation of traffic calming measures but we were clearly advised that there would be no possibility of such in the foreseeable future due to funding shortfall for roads. Satnav data providers have been contacted with a view to getting through routing for heavy vehicles diverted away from the village.

The council availed itself of the opportunity to purchase the two village phone boxes from BT at £1 each (the phones having been removed) and resident Mr Philip Wells undertook to organise a group and oversee the maintenance of the phone boxes.

The trees in the village, especially at Coronation Terrace, have required survey and some pollarding in the interest of safety which has incurred some additional expense and council provided a grant and kitchen fittings as a contribution to the refurbishment of the village hall. The hall forms an important part of the social life of the village as well as providing a venue for clubs and training classes. Additionally, the historic village cross is in need of much needed maintenance and quotations received from approved contractors are very costly although some grant aid may be available.

Despite the expenditure pressure on the council's budget, your council has avoided any increase in its precept for the current year.

Finally, I wish to thank my fellow councillors for their active input into the business of the council and for their support throughout the council year. Additionally, our Clerk, Jo Blackman, has continued to make a considerable professional contribution to the running of Caston Council and providing guidance through the increasing burden of changing legislation. Together, we seek to continue to use our best endeavours in the service of Caston Parish.

David Blincow
Chairman
Caston Parish Council

14th May 2018