



CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT 2018 / 2019

During the past year, the members of Caston Parish Council have endeavoured to pursue policies that seek to preserve the rural nature of the village, mitigate the effects of traffic and to continue to implement the wishes of our parishioners as indicated from the last village appraisal.

During March and April 2017 the Village Appraisal was published and councillors have again been considering items in that report. The provision of a play park was again considered and a decision made to provide a park on council land adjacent to the telephone exchange provided the necessary funding could be raised. However, the matter of planning, roads and traffic remains in the forefront of council's concerns.

Building and Planning

In the view of the council several planning applications have threatened the nature and style of our village and potentially cause additional traffic problems. However, the policy for building new housing as dictated by central government has made this task increasingly difficult. This has also given difficulties to Breckland Council, whose planning department and councillors give or decline permission to develop, in that increasing numbers of developers have taken decisions against them to planning appeal with overriding success. Consequently, Breckland have been reluctant to oppose applications other than in a few isolated circumstances.

The new Breckland Plan for sustainable development was submitted to government and has been returned for further review and change and is expected to be implemented later this year. In the meantime, the lack of identified building land required by government continues to influence the decisions on building and development.

Traffic

The council have been very concerned about the seemingly continuing increase in volume and size of vehicles and speed of traffic through the village. The SAM2 sign has proved a very useful indicator thanks to its record keeping data store and council are currently endeavouring to acquire a second-generation sign. Initiatives to limit size of HGV vehicles using the roads has not been endorsed by Norfolk County roads authority. Council were successful in persuading Norfolk CC to provide a 20-mph sign in way of the school for use at busy times.

Council have continued to be grateful for the work done by the Speed-watch team in monitoring and reporting speeding traffic.

Playground

The village appraisal indicated that there was a need for a children's playground in Caston and despite the lack of parish council owned land it has been developing a proposed site adjacent to the telephone exchange. This has been carefully assessed and currently the outcome of a grant application subsidised by the Parish Council is awaited. We appreciate Councillor Jaki Porters work in progressing this. A managing committee with safety officer will be required to enable the scheme to proceed.

Caston Community Cars

A new scheme to provide volunteer drivers to take residents for medical appointments has just been launched. This is the result of an initiative by Councillor Brian Brooker supported by Dr Chris Riddel. The support of the several volunteer drivers and administration volunteers is much appreciated to facilitate the scheme.

New Council

A new council will take office in May. Caston Parish Council has seven seats but this time there were only five candidates for councillors all of whom are appointed without election. I sincerely hope that other parishioners will apply to be co-opted as councillors in order that the council can continue to benefit from a wide range of experience and views for the benefit of Caston and thus properly fulfil its duties.

I wish to express my thanks as chairman over the last four years for the support and excellent contributions made by all the councillors. Caston has certainly benefitted for the diligent work done by these volunteers and continues to strive to better the experience of living in our delightful Norfolk Village. I have not stood for a further term on council as I am now becoming a senior age and I hope that younger members of our parish can bring their new ideas for the benefit of our community.

Finally, I express thanks to our Council Clerk, Joanne Blackman, who has continued to serve this parish and our council so very professionally over the year.

I wish the new council every success in caring for the future of our community.

David Blincow
Retiring Chairman