**CLERK’S NOTES – MARCH 2017**

Our Open Meetings this year will take place in the Memorial Hall in April on Wednesday 19th (from 6.30 to 9pm) and Thursday 20th (from 2.30 to 6pm). These are informal “drop-in” sessions where you can see what Council is planning, talk to councillors and give feedback and make suggestions. Other groups have been invited to attend as well, so that you can get a view of what is going in the Village more widely – if you run a group and would like to use the occasion to recruit, or make people aware of your activities, please contact us asap.

The Village Fete will be on 22nd July from around noon. If you would like a stall, or be interested in volunteering to help on, or prior to, the day, please get in touch with Diane Sheldon via the office or snettishamfete@gmail.com. More details in the next issue.

The Neighbourhood Plan was introduced to residents in January, with a 92% approval rating. We have taken on board some of the suggestions made. Rather late in the day we were informed that we need some more technical paperwork, in the form of a “Strategic Environmental Assessment” and a “Habitat Regulations Assessment” – joy! It is unlikely that these will require further changes, but they do drag out the process! These have to be approved, then there will be two further rounds of consultation before the referendum. We will keep you informed.

You may have seen that Southgate lane has been cleared – Council has taken this on after many requests; now that it is cleared, we are looking for volunteers to prevent it growing back as it has done in the past – perhaps by looking after a short stretch. Similarly, we need to have a few people who are happy to give some time at the Common. Please get in touch! Following a ruling by the Planning Inspectorate, we will, unfortunately, have to change the nature of the fencing at the Common. This was put up for safety reasons, but, following complaints from three parishioners, the Inspector’s view was that it was inappropriate. We will keep you informed of plans and costs.

Talking of the Common, a new bench will be placed there in memory of Cllr Ann Lamplugh. This is being dedicated by our local MP, Sir Henry Bellingham, on Friday April 7th at 2.30pm. You are welcome to attend, and there will be refreshments afterwards. Please let us know if you would like to come, for catering purposes, and we would suggest walking if possible, as parking will be restricted.

As we all know, things change - recently four phone boxes in the Parish were the subject of consultation. With the preponderance of mobiles these days, between them only 57 calls were made in twelve months. They are all being de-commissioned, though Council is adopting two of them – the Market Square and Ingolside. The first will become an information point, and the second a small facility – e.g. library etc.

The bench in the bus shelter at Newbridge has been replaced after it was stolen some time ago. We have also commissioned a new roof for the one in the Market Square which should be completed by the time of publication.

The major project we have been concentrating on recently has been the provision of new play equipment in the two areas for which we are responsible (Poppyfields is Borough Council). Much of this work had to be done for safety reasons (new surfacing, gate, removal of the Lodge Park wooden trail), replacing equipment previously removed, and introducing new pieces which allow disabled access. All of this had been mentioned in the TORC for the last four issues, and was the subject of a stand at the Open Meetings last year – these are our main ways of communicating with residents. We have been very grateful for those organisations and businesses who have helped, most recently the Co-op and Tesco. Cllr Todd is working now on plans to complete the Lodge Walk scheme, with planting, benches and trees to make the area suitable for everyone, not just the youngsters. Hence, we again encourage you to attend and have your say at the Open Meetings.

We are asked from time to time to do things in the Village which we cannot, for one reason or another. The different levels of councils can be confusing! I thought it might be useful to mention specific issues which we often have to answer:

* Extra crossing by the Co-op – not allowed by Highways due to proximity of one in the Market Square. (We did get them to install dropped kerbs.)
* Speeding – a Police & Highways issue; changing speed limits tends to require actual injury, rather than the risk of one. Speeding is often a matter of perception on narrow roads.
* Footpath being blocked – the County Council have reduced their general path clearance to once a year. They are obliged to keep paths clear though, and rely on reports for this. You can do this online (norfolk.gov.uk) or phone (0344-8008020). (Following pressure from us, they are committed to dealing with issues on the path along the River Ingol, which was quite dangerous.)
* Double yellows – outside the School, and along the Lynn Rd, near the “chicane”. We were asked our opinion in August 2014, and pressed for both to be done. Another (!) consultation ended in February, so we hope that these may finally appear soon….

We have also spent considerable time recently dealing with the question of funding the Sea defences. This has historically been done by the Government, through the Environment Agency. This has changed, and responsibility has been “devolved”. A local “Community Interest Company” has been set up which will cover the costs of the year-to-year recycling of the defences – this has been organised by Mike McDonnell in association with other businesses, and we applaud their efforts. Further, the Government have suggested to the Borough that local parishes should contribute. As we do not have the power to do so through our normal budget, they have suggested we use our discretionary powers (Section 137 - to be technical). The problem with this is two-fold: it could limit our power to donate to local groups, and could raise the precept by up to 20%. We are working closely with Hunstanton, Heacham, Ingoldisthorpe and Dersingham to resist this.

Finally:

I have been asked to encourage those of you who would like an allotment to contact the committee – details elsewhere in the TORC; also, keep your eyes open for news of the films in the Village, and concerts etc. organised by the Heritage Group; please let the TORC team know if you know of someone who is not getting a copy (it is available online); the Annual Parish Meeting will be held sometime in April or May and County Council elections on May 4th.

Wishing you all a Happy Easter, and a good Summer,

Simon