

WITCHAM PARISH COUNCIL



ANNUAL REPORT & SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTS 2019/20

The last few months have tested us all and has made us all assess what are actually the important things in life. There was so much which we took for granted that was no longer available. Thankfully, we are slowly starting to get back to some form of normality, but no one can predict what the new normal will be.

Witcham has always had a strong community spirit which has been proven and even increased during these difficult times. People were very quick to offer assistance to those requiring help. Books, toys and jigsaw puzzles appeared outside of houses and in the bus stop for others to take.

Everyone has missed the social interaction with fellow villagers, but when out for walks everyone seemed keen to chat (whilst respecting social distancing.) VE day was even celebrated with people having a tea party across the High Street whilst seated in their own gardens. People showed their appreciation for the NHS by clapping or playing music every Thursday evening.

With the 50th anniversary pea shoot being cancelled we shall have to have a big 51st!

We are back up to a full compliment of councillors with Sally Wilkin joining us earlier this year. She had already joined us for several meetings last year to discuss her successful fund raising for the speed limit signs.

Parish Council Meetings are held remotely using Zoom

- The cemetery has required more attention this year with a replacement lychgate and tap being necessary. Thanks to Kevin and Steve for fixing the leak and replacing the tap.
- An interactive speed indicator sign has been ordered and will be moved to 5 locations within the village. Data will be collected to measure volume of traffic, speed and time. This will help identify problem times and will be passed on to the Speedwatch team.
- There has continued to be an increasing number of planning applications and amendments which resulted in extra meetings.
- The old phone box will have a fresh coat of paint shortly and should please the new occupant.
- The children's play area will require attention and a questionnaire is being prepared to determine what you would like.
- No new cemetery land available so now only able to offer plots for ashes in the garden of remembrance.

- Persistent dog fouling, news signs were erected and East Cambs are keen to hear of offenders. Problems should be reported to the District Council immediately:
<https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/dogs/dog-fouling-complaint>
- Thanks to Ruth for organising litterpicks and the volunteers who assisted.

Thanks to everyone for making Witcham a good place to live, my fellow councillors, County Councillor (Lorna Dupre), District Councillor (Mark Inskip) and particularly Sue Bell our hard-working Parish Clerk

M Housden - Chairman Witcham Parish Council

ABOUT WITCHAM PARISH COUNCIL

- Comprises 6 Councillors. Next elections May 2023. 4-year term of office, representing an electorate of 355.
- Employs - Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer.
- Internal Auditor – Mr M Williamson. External Auditor - PKF Littlejohn
- Meets normally on second Wednesday of the month except August and December – dates published on village noticeboard and www.witcham.org.uk together with agendas and minutes. Additional meetings are held for planning applications as required.
- The Council is always keen to involve people in community life in Witcham and will enlist the help and support of members of the community to serve on working parties for some projects which are reported back to the Council. There is no committee system.
- The Council carries out its functions financed by the Precept which is collected by the District Council through the Council Tax system. Other income is limited but does include an income from the RSPB in respect of rent on droves situated on the Ouse Washes. Grant aid is obtained to fund any projects from a number of different organisations as and when possible.
- Councillors have opted not to claim the Parish Basic Allowance for elected Councillors.
- The Parish Council is responsible for
 - land: approx 9.5 acres droves on Ouse Washes, and recreation ground at High Street
 - cemetery at Mepal Road
 - infant play area and facilities for older children at recreation ground
 - seats at recreation ground and cemetery
 - 5 street lights (remainder adopted by CCC)
 - bus shelter
 - 2 noticeboards, Interpretation board
 - village sign
 - 3 salt bins, 4 dog bins
 - Red telephone kiosk conservation area (adopted 2010) (No longer in service)

WITCHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

During lockdown, and as this is gradually being lifted, Witcham has remained a safe, friendly, caring community. The Helping Hands initiative - many thanks ladies - and general good neighbourliness has seen people having shopping bought for them and medicines collected. Well done and many thanks to everyone for looking out for your neighbours. Villagers out walking have been courteous about social distancing and there has been a positive, encouraging atmosphere as people greet each other and stop and chat in a way they may not have done pre-Covid-19. Let's hope that more folks out walking and cycling and being community-minded can be maintained as our 'new normal' starts. Some incidents of rule-breaking at the village green were dealt with and, thankfully, have not recurred. Please continue to look after yourselves and those around you and report any concerns to the Neighbourhood Watch Team on: witchamnhw@gmail.com. If the matter is serious or urgent please use 111 or 999 to contact the authorities. If you don't have access to the internet please call me on 01353 777548 and leave a message if I'm out.
Keep well and stay safe.

Jane Lucas
NHW Co-ordinator

PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY – DROVES AND CYCLEWAYS

The Covid-19 pandemic has meant the droves that are normally opened at the end of April were kept locked, though keyholders have been allowed to open them for access. The hot dry weather has made more of the footpaths around the village accessible and it has been good to see them being well used. PLEASE remember that **dog waste needs to be cleaned up on footpaths too** - it is NOT nice encountering it when out walking or having to check all the time for it. Thanks to the vast majority of responsible dog owners who don't need this reminder. If you find any problems with footpaths - obstruction by vegetation, too rutted to walk, etc - please report it on the Cambridgeshire County Council website - search for Rights of Way then Report a Problem. It is interactive, quite accessible and I have been very pleased with the speed of response, recently, when I reported a broken stile and illegible footpath signs at Witcham Gravel. The cycle path along the A142 from Witcham Toll to Sutton is now open and usable. It will be completed as part of the building of the Co-op store on the Sutton roundabout. It is really good to see so many people using this path - walkers, cyclists, runners are all enjoying this safe route from the villages to Ely. Thanks to all the Parish, District and County Councillors who have been working hard to get this path completed. The Government have pledged money to improve our footpaths and cycle routes to encourage people to keep walking and cycling post-pandemic. There is a website, run by a Cambridge based charity, where you can make suggestions for such improvements - widenmypath.com

Jane Lucas
Parish Councillor – Public Rights of Way

SUMMARY OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS

YEAR ENDED 31 March 2020

Year 2018/19 £	RECEIPTS	Year 2019/20 £
14000.00	Precept	14400.00
1017.12	RSPB Rent and Electricity Wayleaves	1017.12
452.00	Cemetery	163.00
4480.38	ECDC CIL money	6535.71
5000.00	Patsy's fund donation Speed Signs	0
101.96	Interest	24.71
1535.21	VAT re-claimed	1991.47
26586.67	TOTAL RECEIPTS	24132.01
	PAYMENTS	
4893.47	Staff costs	5067.00
	Admin:	
442.65	Insurance	448.28
0.00	External Audit	200.00
60.00	Internal Audit	60.00
724.02	Gen Admin - toners, stationery, postage, tel, training, travel etc	467.14
332.70	Subscriptions	380.13
25.00	Bank Fees (Deposit Box)	19.50
236.00	Hire of meeting venues	290.00
40.00	Chairman's Allowance	46.98
0	Polling Fees	200.00
3269.00	Grounds & Cemetery, equipment, etc	9680.36
2177.00	Village grass cutting/maintenance	2372.00
900.00	Grass cutting recreation ground (Cricket Club)	450.00
302.93	Street Lighting Energy and Maintenance	675.10
3876.60	30/40 Speed Limit project	0
353.87	LGA72 S142: What's On, website, CAB, BKG	319.21
210.00	LGA72 S.137	0
2003.47	VAT for year*	1030.88
19846.71	TOTAL PAYMENTS	21706.58

Receipts and Payments Book:		
36405.10	Balance carried forward from previous year	43145.06
26586.67	Add Receipts	24132.01
-		
<u>19846.71</u>	Less Payments	<u>-21706.58</u>
<u>43145.06</u>	Balance at 31 March, to carry forward to new year	<u>45570.49</u>

Bank Reconciliation:		
3654.18	Current Account at 31 March	3547.76
<u>44142.80</u>	Add Deposit A/cs	<u>43103.22</u>
47796.98	Total	46650.98
<u>-4651.92</u>	Less unrepresented cheques	<u>-1080.49</u>
<u>43145.06</u>		<u>45570.49</u>

2019/20 ACCOUNTS AND 2020/21 PRECEPT

The Notice of Public Rights and Publication of the Unaudited Annual Return in respect of the Accounts for the financial year ended 31 March 2020 has been carried out during August/September. The Precept for 2020/21 was set at £15,300

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Due to Covid-19 the Annual Parish meeting could not be held in the Village Hall in April/May. It has now been re-scheduled to take place on 30 September 2020 as a remote meeting using Zoom. Details will be published on the village noticeboard and the website.

PLAY EQUIPMENT

Some of the equipment will require replacing soon and the Council will be seeking views on what residents would like to see on site, to help build a picture and take into account as many views as possible. Space is limited, of course, as we shall continue to honour accommodating the Witcham Cricket Club. A survey is being prepared for distribution.

In 2019/20 we have

- Held a meeting of the Parish Council each month. In order to meet planning application deadlines a further 4 meetings were held.
- Considered and commented on 15 planning applications and some 20 applications came back for review for amendments, discharge of conditions and dealing with reserved matters, together with a number of applications for tree works in the conservation area.
- Provided and maintained recreation ground and children's play areas
- Installed additional dog bin at Martins Lane/Back Lane and Market Way/Headleys Lane
- Had designed, and installed, replacement lychgate at the cemetery and had gates refurbished.
- Maintained street lights(No.5) owned by the Parish Council.
- Worked with CCC to protect and maintain the local network of public rights of way, including the droves
- Supported promotion of the Ely Zipper service
- Training: Clerk – CAPALC/SLCC/ECDC seminars
- Consultee on various strategies and policies affecting the area, including County and District Councils
- Produced and circulated to each householder, Parish Council Newsletters and the Council's Annual Report
- Provide and maintain Parish Council website www.witcham.org.uk
- Supported publication of monthly "What's On" parish newsletter (Editor June Wells)
- Reported issues to appropriate local authorities/bodies, eg highways, street lighting, dog fouling etc
- Reviewed Policies and Procedures on a rolling programme

2019 BEST KEPT GARDEN RESULTS

Best Overall Garden: 36 High Street

Runner-up: 7a Martins Lane

Best Flower Garden: The Brambles, High Street

Runner-up: 32 High St and 16 Silver Street

Best Vegetable Garden: Hillcrest, Mepal Road

Runner-up: Highpoint, Hive Road

Our grateful thanks to Paula for judging our competition.

2020 BEST KEPT GARDEN COMPETITION

Sadly, due Covid-19, the 2020 Best Kept Garden Competition had to be cancelled.

We are very much hoping to resume next year.

In 2020/21 we will

- Maintain the recreation ground and children's play areas, and promote the health and well-being of parishioners
- Maintain the cemetery. Currently we are unable to release any further plots. We do have plenty of space in the Garden of Remembrance. We are not able to get land for an extension to existing site.
- Work with CCC to ensure the availability of public transport to serve the village; we ask residents to use the Ely Zipper service as much as possible to ensure the future of a bus service for Witcham
- Continue to work with ECDC, CCC, landowners and all interested parties on the future management of the network of the public rights of ways in the parish
- Provide opportunity and encourage people to take an interest in community life in Witcham – please do your best to support the village clubs and Witcham Village Hall
- Continue to engage with the community and regularly report on the Council's activities, namely to produce and circulate newsletters to each home and an Annual Report.
- Ensure the website is up-dated with Council agendas, minutes and news
- Work in partnership with other bodies and agencies, and where possible improve facilities and enhance the quality of life for people in Witcham.
- Participate in and respond to consultation processes at national and local level, including the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan
- Training: continued development and knowledge for Clerk and New Councillor Training workshops

Help keep Witcham clean and tidy

When out with your dog, please be considerate and use the dog bins or take home for the black bag

Dogs are never permitted on the recreation ground, even when on a leash

COUNCILLOR CONTACT DETAILS & RESPONSIBILITIES

CHAIRMAN Mick Housden	01353 777181	17 The Slade Witcham Ely CB6 2LA <i>Responsibilities: Cemetery, Recreation Ground and Play Areas, CAPALC</i>
VICE-CHAIRMAN Karl Mackender	01353 777640	19 High Street Witcham Ely CB6 2LQ <i>Responsibilities: Cemetery</i>
Julia Bibby	01353 777267	26 Martins Lane Witcham Ely CB6 2LB <i>Responsibilities: Cemetery, Best Kept Garden Competition</i>
Laura Holdaway	01353 774717	Witcham House Headleys Lane Witcham Ely CB6 2LH <i>Responsibilities: Cemetery Playground Project</i>
Jane Lucas	01353 777548	8 The Orchards Witcham Ely CB6 2LR <i>Responsibilities: Cemetery, Public Rights of Way, Neighbourhood Watch Liaison</i>
Sally Wilkin	01353 777588	Witcham Equestrian Centre Mepal Road Witcham Ely CB6 2LD <i>Responsibilities: Cemetery</i>

Sue Bell Clerk/RFO
17 Astley Close Sutton
Ely Cambs CB6 2PG
witchamparishc@btinternet.com

