

CHAIR'S REPORT TO THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING MAY 10TH 2018 – THE WAY FORWARD

“Back to the Future – or getting the best from both by a problematic balancing act!”

Talking about life in the village – and what it holds for her – a long-standing member of the parish commented, “I don't want to know what has already happened, I want to know what will be happening.” The risk of any Annual Parish Meeting report becoming a list of what has been done is very great and I am therefore very relieved that I can report that what has been done has a great deal to do with what will be happening in the future!! One year ago the Parish Plan seemed but an idea that the Parish Council had come up with, now it has become a reality which is already playing out, driven by villagers for the benefit of villagers.

A year on; What have we achieved?

The **Parish Plan Questionnaire** has been constructed, delivered, returned, processed and steered into operation on appropriate fronts. The **Telecommunications Mast** site has been appropriately located to meet both aesthetic and practical needs. A site for the **Parish Flood and Equipment** store has been found and the building is up and operational. **Ferry End** has now been officially transferred to the care of the Parish Council by Possessory Title. The **Aircrews Memorial** is now constructed and in situ. **Speed reminder bin stickers** are now fitted to many of the bins on the main street and displayed every Monday. The **Friendship Coffee Morning** is well established and successful. The **Events Group** is operational having already supported two events and now planning the next three – Royal Wedding celebrations, Cycling and Memorial days. The **Neighbourhood Watch Group** is operational and has already had two meetings and been involved in reporting local incidents. The **Countryside and Footpaths Group** has also had two meetings and its first organised walk.

Where are we heading next?

The following groups will follow on similar developmental lines to our first three Parish Plan Questionnaire response groups and will be composed of those villagers willing to help achieve objectives expressed or inferred by them in the Questionnaire.

Communications Development Group – to investigate all forms of village communication but especially the Parish Website.

A **Transport and Highways Group** - to endeavour to plan a case for a long-term strategy for speeding, parking and highway improvement as well as coordination and support for improved bus and rail services.

An **Emergency Response and Support Group** to coordinate the work and roles of relevant existing groups such as the Flood Action Group, the Defibrillator Support Group and Neighbourhood Watch Group.

A **“Parish Estate” Support Group** to help develop and maintain the Parish's land holdings, including Jubilee Ponds, Glebe Field and Ferry End.

Continuing and developing further cooperation and joint ventures with all parish bodies, groups and organisations – especially St Mary's Church, the Village Hall, Bleasby Primary School, the Waggon and Horses and the WI, along with the newly emerging Parish Plan Groups and existing bodies such as Local History, Playgroup, Bleasby Bikers, Bleasby Runners etc. An enhancement of the parish environment which has been sought through comment in the Parish Plan Questionnaire feedback and which was brought to focus by last year's entry in the Best Kept Village competition. The Council Elections next year (May 2019) when it is to be hoped that parishioners will seriously consider standing for election to the Parish Council so that new faces, new ideas and new energy is forthcoming.

What are our key objectives?

To implement the emerging Parish Plan to try to ensure that expressed needs and aspirations can be met as far as practically possible.

To rally the potential of all parishioners and to forge a powerful source of village support in time of need.

To develop the community spirit and a cohesive population.

To retain that which we most value whilst addressing and accommodating change which is inevitable and ensuring that the parish is viable, prosperous and dynamic.

To ensure that all parishioners feel valued, welcome, supported and considered as part of the community.

To continue planning for the future and allowing the Parish Plan to evolve and be part of a continuous process of consultation and response that will provide direction and purpose.

In any Parish Council decision making it should be done with the following mantra “What is best for the parish and how does it progress or hinder the Parish Plan and the expressed consensus of parishioner views within?”

What might hinder progress towards these ends?

Lack of succession planning – we need to ensure that there are always others to continue the roles and good work of others.

Lack of funding for initiatives, development and improvement – our current income cannot sustain more than running and maintenance costs.

Lack of willingness to contribute to or become involved in the community.

An aging population.

An escalation of house prices.

Introduction of new legislation this month which may make communications between and across parish organisations more problematic.

How can we avoid this?

Constantly work to maintain community spirit.

Encourage all ages to contribute whatever and whenever they are able and to recognise that everyone can, and should, have a part to play.

Ensure that all parishioners feel valued and whose opinion is respected, can be heard and considered by others.

Give serious consideration to the raising of the Parish Precept next year – an additional £1,000 would increase the average (Band D) householder bill by £3.50 per annum. **Conclusion**

The Parish Council can achieve very little – and very few of its objectives – without the full support of the village.

We hope, very much, that the Parish Plan will be seen as the way to the future and give everyone, especially my “long-standing” member of the community referred to earlier, something to look forward to, and giving everyone the opportunity to throw in their lot – no matter how insignificant they might see it to be – to help ensure a certain, a viable, lively and attractive village environment for current and future inhabitants of the Parish of Bleasby.

Peter Cast