

Chairman's Report - Lingwood and Burlingham Parish Council

Annual Parish Meeting, March 27 2012

It's been nearly a year since all of the changes to the Parish Council - and what a year it's been! The Council has re-formed, re-focused and moved forwards with a new energy.

May 2011 saw the end of the previous four year term of office for our councillors. Just 4 previous councillors stood. The Parish Council is now back to full strength (12 members) through a co-option process which has given us a very broad spectrum of people with a variety of skills and backgrounds.

The structure of the Council has changed significantly. We now have two committees, a Facilities Committee and a Communication and Community Committee. These committees have been formed for several reasons; Firstly, we wanted to give more time to the discussion and resolution of problems. Secondly, we wanted to give people the choice to attend additional meetings (main Parish Council meetings use a legal summons to call Councillors). Thirdly, we wanted greater involvement from other councillors through the use of different people to Chair (and Vice-chair) these meetings. The Committees have been a success. The Communication in the Community Committee (Comm Comm Comm) has produced newsletters, organised the Jubilee Celebrations, run consultations and written the application for Best in Broadland among other things. The Facilities Committee deals with any facility, owned or leased, for which the Parish Council has responsibility. They have made a significant impact on the Parish, particularly through the work undertaken at the pond and the Millennium Green. The Standing Orders for the Facilities Committee have been amended to allow a higher level of public participation. This has worked really well and we thank those who come along and have an input to these meetings.

The last newsletter gave the background to the increases to the precept. The precept is the Parish Council's income, and is collected alongside the main council tax. During discussions in our January meeting it was agreed to raise the precept by 9%. This figure is needed to allow the council to cover its expenses. The increased number of facilities which require ongoing maintenance has increased in recent years and inflation is still running at around 4%. The change leaves us in a more sustainable position.

The Millennium Green is being ever more well used and the addition of the trees has begun to break up the space. Our tree planting day was very well attended and all of the trees have been sponsored. The BMX area has provided both a focal point for the youngsters and a headache at times! Lessons have been learned, but we are very pleased with the ownership and attitude taken by the majority of its users. The play area is still well used and

seems to provide as much enjoyment for parents (and grandparents) talking, as the children who are playing.....

Our Village Hall continues to thrive. Another great year, with over £7500 income over expense, and another great fireworks event. The rebuild project continues and will gather pace over the coming months. The Parish Council have been closer to affairs of the hall over recent years and have now voted, in principle, to become trustee of the hall. This is unlikely to happen soon, if it happens at all, but is further reinforcement of our willingness to work together for the good of the parish.

The village pond. What a transformation! The causeway has been renewed, the undergrowth managed, and the whole area is looking great. Thanks to BADCOG for all the work they've done and the support they've given us on this and other topics. Thanks also to Ray Britt for championing this project and breathing life into it. A great job.

The trusteeship of the Reading Room passed to the Parish Council in 2010. Ongoing discussions about the future use of the building will ensure it remains a part of our parish life in the long term. My thanks to the Management Committee for the continued involvement and the work they undertake.

Thanks also to those who continue to help and support us and the Parish. Tony Bowyer for his continued efforts with the footpaths. Ernest Hoyos our Tree Warden for his help and advice. Anne Bone and Tony Gould for their award winning efforts with litter collection. The Village Hall Committee for their continued hard work. Most importantly to Maureen Bredbere for her potato and leek soup at the tree planting!

Thanks, as always, must go to our Clerk, Sonya Dickinson, who keeps us in check and does far more behind the scenes than some realise. Lastly, but by no means least, my most sincere thanks to all of our councillors. Each of them gives up their time freely to help the wider community and for that we should be very grateful. In their own way, each of them makes a significant difference and I would not want to lose any of them. It's a great team and I'm proud to be part of it.

Many thanks,

Ben Bethell - Chairman