

Chairman's Report for the Annual Meeting of Knowstone Parish 2023

Welcome to this, the first Annual Meeting of the Parish during the Carolean era.

Since last year's meeting the Parish, and the country, have seen a Royal Jubilee, a Royal Funeral and a Coronation. All these events are completely new to most of the population, although statistically, we have a higher percentage of people living in the Parish who will remember the previous coronation.

The members of the Parish Council were recently re-elected without a public vote, due to there not being any other candidates wishing to stand. Since this time last year, Chris Dey has joined us to fill our allocation of 7 councillors.

Our Parish Clerk, Wendy Sweet, has just resigned from her role, having held the post for 6 years. We will miss her greatly and hope that she is able to enjoy more time relaxing rather than trying to control our bi-monthly meetings.

The very-long-running saga of East Hill Farm has finally come to a sort of end. To briefly summarise, the developer who purchased the site many years ago had permission to refurbish the farmhouse and renovate the two barns on condition that he built two affordable homes. A parcel of land and a cash sum were to be donated to the village. At the end of last year the legal agreement stipulating these conditions ran out and the developer then re-applied to renovate the barns with no conditions attached. Despite our protestations this application was permitted by the planning department meaning that the village gets no affordable homes, no land and no cash. The farmhouse is currently let having failed to sell for more than 3 years.

On a brighter note Great Wadham Farm has been sold – and is now being managed by a resident of the parish.

Also, an application for Planning in Principle which was rejected by the planning officer, but supported by the parish council was overturned at committee giving a resident the opportunity to house two more generations of his family in the parish.

Many local roads are in a parlous state due to potholes. Please keep reporting them via the website although the criteria seem to mean that unavoidable shallow but severe potholes are not fixed whereas deeper avoidable ones are repaired. The Parish Council is considering undertaking some repair work itself to alleviate the situation.

We are fortunate to have several lovely footpaths in the parish. Again, budgetary considerations can mean that these are not always maintained to the highest standards. If you see specific problems with gates/stiles etc, please advise Cllr Parry, the footpaths officer.

The Parish Council wishes to express its thanks for the assistance of District Cllr Ley and County Cllr Yabsley. Cllr Ley has now retired from his role after more than 20 years and we wish him well in retirement.

As chairman I would like once again to thank the councillors who do their best, sometimes struggling with considerable bureaucracy, to make our parish a safer, more pleasant place to live. Also, please come along to our council meetings and, if you have any concerns about local matters, speak to your councillors and we will endeavour to assist, or pass information further up the chain.

John Pomfret – Chairman, Knowstone Parish Council.