

## Earl Stonham Parish Council – Chair’s Report 2022

I am pleased to be writing my first annual report following my election as Chair at last year’s annual meeting in May 2021.

Earl Stonham Parish Council is a local authority that makes decisions on behalf of the people who live in the parish. It is the level of local government closest to the community, with Mid-Suffolk District Council and Suffolk County Council above it in the hierarchy.

On their own, parish councils have limited powers to make decisions, but we do have the ability to negotiate with, and the power to influence other organisations that do make the final decisions. Probably the most common topics that we get involved with in Earl Stonham are planning matters (we are statutory consultees), crime prevention, roads, and highways.

In the year since May 2021, the Parish Council has:

- Held 7 meetings.
- Considered 32 Planning Applications and submitted views to Mid Suffolk District Council as part of the planning process.
- The Village web site, maintained by the Parish Council, has received 1,924 page views in the last 12 months, with the Village Hall, Parish Council, St Mary’s Church and the Recorder pages receiving the most visits. Almost 80% of those visits come from the UK, but almost 13% from the USA and 5% from China. 53% of visitors are using a desktop browsers to access the site, with the rest via a tablet or other mobile device.
- Sought the views of residents about the 7 streetlights for which we are responsible. While there was no consensus about a way forward, we are planning further work on this in the coming year as 2 streetlights are nearing their end of life.
- Worked with residents of Blacksmiths Lane, County Councillor Matthew Hicks and Anglia Water to put in place temporary measures during the most recent closure of Saxham Street. While this was only partially successful it did reduce some of the impact residents had experienced following the pre-Christmas closure. We will continue to push for the promised remediation works to Blacksmiths Lane.
- Worked with Road Safety Partners to address speeding within the Parish. This is a perennial problem (not just here). In 2021 124 speeding offences through the 30mph limits were detected on the A1120 (35mph to 47mph) and 177 on the A140 (35mph to 57mph). This compares with the 2020 figures for the A1120 (148 offences) and A140 (40 offences). These figures are solely detected by staffed equipment.
- Supported the setting up of a Community Speed Watch Team with a co-ordinator and 8 team members. This is currently going through the necessary registration and training processes with the Police, and we hope it will become operational in the next few weeks.

In the coming weeks and months there will be two significant consultations taking place

1. A Community Governance Review led by Mid Suffolk District Council. It is a statutory process to review the whole of the district to consider one or more of the following:
  - a. Creating, merging, altering or abolishing Parishes;

- b. The naming of Parishes and the style of new Parishes;
  - c. The electoral arrangements for Parishes (the ordinary year of election; council size; the number of councillors to be elected to the council, and Parish warding), and
  - d. Grouping new or existing Parishes under a common Parish Council or de-grouping existing Parishes
2. National Grid are consulting on proposals to reinforce the high-voltage electricity network from Norwich Main substation via Bramford substation to Tilbury substation in Essex. The preferred route corridor passes to the west of the Parish, along Saxham Street and running South between Stowupland, Stowmarket and Needham Market

This year marks Her Majesty the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, after 70 years of service and in only a few weeks, events will be taking place across the Country. Events commence here with the lighting of a beacon on the Village Green on Thursday 2 June at 9.45pm. There will be a special jubilee themed Pub Night on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> June and a Big Celebration Lunch on Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> June where people will be asked to bring food to share. I hope that as many people as possible will join in with these celebrations.

I must pay tribute to all those people in the village who give freely of their time and efforts for the benefit of the wider community in Earl Stonham. Whether it is the organising of the events and activities that take place at the village hall, the creation of the Jubilee Garden, the Annual Pantomime, or those regular activities such as the production and distribution of the Recorder; none of these would be possible without the input of those individuals – my sincere thanks for all your hard work.

And finally, I should like to express my thanks to my fellow parish councillors, who also give freely of their time, for their support during my first year of office, ably supported by our Parish Clerk, Jennie, who endeavours to keep us under some semblance of control. I should also like to thank County Councillor Matthew Hicks and District Councillor Suzie Morley for their support during this past year.

Mark Gillett  
Chair, Earl Stonham Parish Council