

Earl Stonham Parish Council – Chair’s Report 2023

I am pleased to present my annual report for 2022/23. At the recent local elections 7 Councillors stood for re-election and, as there were no other candidates the election was uncontested. 2 Councillors, Henry Glasse and Andy Stevens decided that it was time for them to stand down. I should like to pass on my, and those of the Parish Council’s, thanks to them for their contribution as Councillors.

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 2023, the Parish Council has:

- Held 8 meetings.
- Considered 26 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 1,675 page views in the last 12 months (slightly lower than 2021/22), 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 17% from the USA and 2% from China. 53% of visitors are using desktop browsers to access the site, with the rest via a tablet or other mobile device (figures which are broadly similar to 2021/22).
- Following on from last year’s Street Light consultation, replacement LED Lamps have been fitted to 2 of the lights. We have secured funding from Cllr Hicks and Cllr Morley to upgrade the remaining 5 lights during 2023.
- Speeding continues to be a significant concern to residents. In 2021 the Safety Camera Team detected a total of 321 speeding offences during 2022.
- The Community Speed Watch Team began operating in the summer of 2022. In 2022 the team recorded 231 cases of speeding which were reported to Suffolk Police. So far in 2023 54 motorists have been reported.
- Following the traffic survey we have held discussions with a Highways Engineer to explore options in relation to speed signage and white lining and other mitigations, further discussions are to take place following the local elections, including the identification of funds to support any works.

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

1. National Grid are continuing with their 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. There is significant opposition to the use of pylons. Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk Pylons Group are leading protests against the current proposals and lobbying Government, supported by local MPs across East Anglia to reopen discussion about a sub-sea route rather than pylons. We continue to receive updates about this.

2. In recent weeks we have been contacted by a company called Low Carbon who are proposing to develop a new solar farm to be known as Willow Solar Farm on agricultural land adjacent to Blacksmiths Lane. Details of a Webinar and Village Hall Drop-In event have been circulated previously. The proposal will be subject to a planning application in due course.

As I write this report the Coronation of King Charles III is due to take place on 6 May. By the time you read this there will have been a King's Coronation Celebration Supper on Friday 5 May followed by the Coronation Big Lunch on 7 May. and a Big Celebration Lunch on Sunday 5th 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 annual pantomime, the organising of events to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III, 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