

SOUTH LOPHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman's Annual Report to Village Meeting

Held on Friday, 15th April, 2011 at 7.30 p.m.

At The Village Hall

Introduction

Welcome. It is good to have so many here. My name is Robert McCaw and I am Chairman of the South Lopham Parish Council. I would also introduce my colleague Lindsey Westbrook-Lay who is Chairman of North Lopham Parish Council. It is particularly gratifying that this is the first joint village meeting for North and South Lopham. The Lopham Society now incorporates both villages and I hope this unifying trend will continue. We have distributed an outline of the programme this evening and you will see that there is much to get through so I would request that we all keep our contributions brief.

We commence proceedings with the village meeting of South Lopham. As a formality I would just mention that I have the Minutes here of last year's village meeting which I shall sign at the end of this meeting. There is a copy available for anyone who wishes to peruse them.

People

During the year we were sorry to lose Lyn Llewellyn as Parish Clerk after five years' valuable service. We were fortunate in being able to appoint her namesake Lynn Perry as her replacement. We are losing Steve Morley as a Parish Councillor after four years' service. On behalf of the Council, I would like to thank him for his excellent work during his period of office (often beyond the call of duty).

Finance

In these times of austerity we managed to avoid any increase in the precept which remains at £2,500.

The combination of this austerity and the aims of the Localism Bill is putting pressure on parish councils to take over work from the County Council and the District Council. For example, we are being asked whether we can take on certain maintenance tasks such as grass cutting and hedge trimming and sign-post cleaning, from the County Council. We lack the resources to engage contractors for this work on a commercial basis. If anyone is willing to undertake the work voluntarily we shall be pleased to hear from them.

We have purchased a new grit bin which will be situated at the junction of the A1066 and Blo Norton Road. When it is full of grit perhaps residents will help by spreading it on footpaths next winter and this, of course, applies equally to the existing grit bin near the bus shelter.

Planning

The new Settlement Boundary proposed by Breckland Council has not yet been finalised and is going through the long approval process. We shall be hearing from William Nunn later on on planning matters which impact upon the parish. Through the year we have been making our recommendations on planning applications in the village. It is probably fair to say that there have been no major planning issues in the village over this period.

Highways

The Parish Council remains concerned about the speed of traffic through the village, particularly on the A1066. We have also had problems with heavy lorries negotiating the bend from the A1066 into Church Road. We continue to have problems with potholes and blocked drains. Peter Coster is in constant touch with Highways Department of the County Council in relation to all these issues. In particular it seems that we are at last getting to the bottom of the problem of the large puddle on the bend between the two Lophams which is particularly dangerous during winter.

The Mrs. Halsom Legacy

As previously announced, most of the £1,000 will be spent on the fabrication and location of a new notice board outside St. Andrew's Church. We are grateful to Nigel Martin for undertaking this work.

The Telephone Kiosk

The Parish Council purchased this from BT for £1, which was never paid! Pat Blanchet will be speaking about its possible use later in the meeting. I would just like to record our thanks to Steve Morley for making and mounting a large board for the display of artworks in the kiosk.

Web Site

I am pleased to report that owing to the efforts of Peter Coster our web site has now been updated and residents are encouraged to visit it. It is intended that agendas and minutes of parish council meetings will appear on the site.

Participation of the Community

In these days of the Big Society we would like to encourage further participation by residents in the village activities. This includes the social aspect, as promoted by the Lophams Society, from whom you will be hearing later. It also includes help with more practical tasks such as the bi-

annual litter pick and annual bulb planting. I would also request that residents maintain verges and hedges outside their property even though they may not own the land in question. This can make a considerable difference to the appearance of the village.

I was disappointed that we received no nominations for the parish council beyond the existing members. We need at least one new councillor to replace Steve Morley. If anyone is interested could he or she please inform me or any other councillor or Lynn Perry as Parish Clerk.

Conclusion

I should like to thank my fellow councillors and Lynn as Clerk for all their work over the last year and thank you all for attending here tonight.

Robert McCaw
Chairman