

UPWELL PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT – APRIL 2009

At the half-way point in the tenure of this Council, as elected in 2007, it is pleasing to report that there have been no changes in the membership, all 13 councillors being those then elected. The Committee structure adopted to facilitate the conduct of the Council's various functions continues to work well, while the monthly full Council meeting enables all councillors to be updated on all of the various aspects of each committee's work. The Council, via its parish Clerk, endeavours to inform and advise the residents of the parish of the Council's workings and deliberations. It does this through a variety of means, but in particular through the website, the quarterly newsletter, the 3 Council notice boards and the press releases.

Whereas members of the public are entitled to attend all meetings, this opportunity is rarely taken up, although there have, on occasions, been residents attending the monthly surgery. The exception to this pattern is the Planning Committee which is regularly visited, sometimes by good numbers of concerned residents – on one occasion, 28 people arrived! It may, of course, be that parishioners are content with the information they receive through the channels mentioned, but councillors would prefer to see public representation at all of their meetings.

While the more routine business of Council has continued smoothly, the last year has been particularly productive in terms of the progress made towards achieving many of the objectives of the Parish Plan, set out and published in 2006. Among those objectives, for example, was the establishment and development of a Neighbourhood Watch scheme. This scheme is better known in Norfolk as Home Watch, and, from tentative beginnings in 2007/08, we have now moved to a situation where we have over 200 properties covered by the scheme, and over 400 individual residents of those properties listed on the Home watch data base. The success of the scheme is due very largely to the enthusiasm and commitment of time afforded by a team of local co-ordinators, but the response of residents in general has been rewardingly good. Such is the progress made that the Council received an Award, received by its Chairman, as Co-ordinator of the year for West Norfolk. Our scheme was also considered for the title of best in Norfolk overall, - in the event being placed second in the whole county. The Council would stress that the scheme remains open to additional membership, and currently we are still being joined by more residents week by week.

Another commitment in the Parish Plan was to promote leisure activities within this community. This year has seen the addition to the previous list of activities of "Walk Upwell" – a Council initiative which has seen over 40 residents joining what is in effect a club for people interested in organised walks. This scheme, which has proved to be an excellent example of co-

operation between Council and community, is now well established, with a published programme of organised walks, led by experienced volunteers, and is now affiliated to the Ramblers` Association.

It is true to say that sound progress has been made on virtually all aspects of the Plan, but there is in Council a determination to further work on, for example, closer co-operation with the police and social services, enhancing provision for young people, and further developing mutually beneficial contacts with our school, our churches and our many clubs and societies. In this connection, councillors have been gratified by the many favourable comments received on the development and enlargement of our Council newsletter. This has moved on to represent many aspects of progress and development in our villages, while also reflecting on many of the interesting aspects of earlier life in our parish. It has therefore been redefined as a "Council and Community Newsletter," so that more and more we are seeing councillors meeting with willing volunteers to produce features of interest to all.

I am indebted to my fellow councillors and parishioners who serve on our committees and working groups. All parish councillors are volunteers, and while several councillors are still in full-time employment, we all have other interests and activities which sometimes have to be sacrificed. I pay particular tribute to the work of both our Parish Clerk, Kate Cobley, and our Assistant Clerk, Kate Bennett, who remain stubbornly cheerful and good-humoured although frequently semi-submerged in paperwork and calls on their time.

Neil Morgan

Council Chairman