

Walberswick Parish Council (WPC) Report to Walberswick APM

April 2024

It has been a bit of a “mixed” year for WPC with real progress made on a number of fronts, tempered with considerable frustration on others

Let's begin with some of the many positives:

- The Council has set its budget for the 24/25 tax year and we are very proud to have been able to hold the precept (for a 4th consecutive year) completely flat year on year, despite the inflation of recent times. I don't know how much longer we can do that for, but rest assured that we will continue to seek out efficiencies and cost reductions where we can, while still investing in the village.
- We have also had another smooth year accounts-wise with completely clean audits again from both our internal and external auditors. In this regard, I would like to thank our extremely professional and capable Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer who have now worked for WPC for 5 years. All the details of the Council budget, meetings and decisions can be found on our website at:
<http://walberswick.onesuffolk.net/walberswick-parish-council/>
- Last year the Council set itself the challenge to repair and refurbish some of the aging infrastructure that is in the care of the Parish Council, including the noticeboards on Stocks Green, the Toddler Play Area and the Playing Field fence. I'm delighted to say that this work is just about complete: the new notice boards are installed and have been very well received and the refurbishment work on the Toddler Play Area will be completed within the next month. This includes the refurbishment of existing equipment and the installation of three new pieces of play equipment, partly with grants courtesy of our District & County Councillors, to whom we are indebted for their continuing support. The “Birds Nest” swing in particular is rated as suitable for an age range from “3 months to adult”(!) so there is no excuse for any of you not to go and try it out!
- We are very fortunate to have a number of advisory groups working with the Parish Council, including the Scroll Advisory Group, and the Speed Watch team, all of whom I would like to thank for their input and advice. Our most active advisory group continues to be the Planning Advisory Group (PAG) and we remain indebted as a Council and a village to them for the excellent work they do in assessing the many planning applications we receive. Our hope is that the NDP, once approved, will make it much less likely that East Suffolk District Council planners will be able to ignore the arguments put forward by PAG and WPC that seek to limit overdevelopment in our village.

Let's turn now to the major frustration – inevitably it is Lionlink, which you will hear more about later in this meeting. The Parish Council remains implacably opposed to Lionlink and has put much time and effort into composing responses to the non-statutory consultations and most

recently the Environment Impact Assessment Scoping Report. I would like to say that we think that all this work has been worthwhile because it has been listened to and our views have been taken into account, but sadly this is not the case. All this time and effort could of course have been much more constructively spent doing things like working up the Neighbourhood Development Plan because let's be clear, it is the same resources and people doing these pieces of work. However there is no choice but to continue to put the case on behalf of the village, lest "silence be taken as assent" and rest assured that the Parish Council will continue to do that. We are particularly grateful to Councillor Bassinette for all her many hours of work on this topic and also for the support we have received from associated groups such as WALL. And lastly we are very grateful to all of you who took time and effort yourselves to send in letters of objection – it is the one and most important thing that you can all do to help. Sizewell C of course also continues to be the "gift that keeps on giving" and as it looks increasingly likely to go-ahead our focus is now switching toward whatever mitigation we can get for the impact on our community, which is going to be both significant and for a lot of years to come.

To finish my report, many of you will remember that following the May 2023 elections, we had one vacancy for a Councillor and I am delighted to say that we have been able to co-opt Emilie Dadswell to fill that post, so the Council is now back to full strength. All Councillors serve our community on a purely voluntary basis and we are all indebted to all of them for doing so and therefore please join me in welcoming Emilie to the team and thanking my other fellow councillors: Josie Bassinette, Esme Richardson, Lee Sutton, Rebecca Whiting and Peter Watson for all they do for the village

Andrew Lewis

Chair, Walberswick Parish Council