

Dennington Parish Council
Annual Parish Meeting
Annual Meeting of the Parish Council
Chairman's Report May 2023



Dennington looking west

INTRODUCTION:

Looking back over the last year's Minutes of the Parish Council meetings, I'm struggling to find any significant highlights, or nadirs.

The Census 2021 results are now available on the Office of National Statistics website. We have a population of 560 people. From a demographic and socio-economic perspective, our village can be described as follows:-

We are above the UK average for the proportion of men, educational achievement, managers, company directors, skilled tradesmen, pensioners, families, home ownership, general good health and lack of any deprivation.

We are below the UK average for the proportion of women, unemployed, workers aged 18-44, severe deprivation, ill health and centrally heated homes.

Dennington is a lovely place to live, work & raise a family. The Census confirms what we all knew already. The Parish Council meetings are devoid of significant controversy or excitement. Our small village is quietly efficient as we go about our business – Just how it should be.

VOLUNTEERS:

This quiet efficiency is largely due to the hard work of The Trustees of the Consolidated Charities, Village Hall, Sports & Social Club, the Parochial Church Council and individual villagers. In particular, I would like to thank the following people for their continued work hard throughout the year, maintaining our village:-

- Ian Mann for cutting the Green. The copse on the Green has also thoroughly tidied and the brambles cleared by the hard work from Yvonne & Trevor Mouncer
- Peter Nobbs for cutting the areas of grass in the Village Centre around the traffic directional signs, village seat and pond site. Peter has also cut the long grass and hedge at the edge of the village green and footpaths around Swainston Way. The Centre of the village always looks very tidy.
- Dennington Horticultural Society for planting the flowers along the edge of the Village Green.
- Adrian Neill for cutting the Village Recreation Field on a regular basis. I am sure you'll agree with me by having this area of open space kept tidy, it gives us an important recreational area within the centre of the village.
- Roy & Sam Steward who donate the fuel for the ride-on mower. Fuel is incredibly expensive and having this provided free of charge makes a considerable saving for the council.
- Nick Watts for providing the labour and equipment at no cost to the council, cutting the hedges around the village green and allotments, and clearing ditches.
- Robert Rous for cutting the grass verge at the Frostley Bridge junction. This helps to reduce accidents at this junction.

I would like to thank our representatives from all the organisations within the village who have submitted reports to the Council.

Dennington is very lucky to have so many groups and individuals who serve their village. The Parish Council is represented on most of these groups, by nominating one or more Trustees. The only disadvantage of having so many bodies willing to serve, is co-ordination of activities and being able to access public funds for expensive improvements & enhancements – Perhaps this is an area where the Parish Council and it's nominated representatives could assist more.

PARISH COUNCILLORS:

The last election was in May 2023. As the number of nominations matched the number of councillor vacancies (nine), the election on 4th of May 2023 was uncontested. Your Councillors are below:-

- Mr. John Calver
- Mrs. Doris Dearing
- Mr. Nick Hopewell-Smith
- Mr. Matt Lunn
- Ms. Vashti Mouncer
- Dr. Geraldine Schofield
- Mr. Kevin Shelver
- Mr. Sam Steward
- Mr. Robert Wardley

Councillors are elected for 4 years, are independent of political parties and give their time voluntarily to serve the community, and to look after village affairs. I wish to thank all councillors, past & present for their trust & support which they have placed in me over the past year; and thank those who have taken on additional appointments on behalf of the Council.

In between elections, Council vacancies may occur; the council may co-opt another councillor, or a further election may be called if 11 or more electors petition for an election. If you might be interested in becoming a Councillor, have a look at the following website: <https://www.local.gov.uk/be-councillor>

The Council is supported by our Clerk, Lydia Kirk, who is extremely efficient in every aspect of what she does in connection with Council's business. We are very fortunate to have such a dedicated person who has taken such a keen interest in our village.

Mr. Nick Watts choose not to stand in the May election, and stood down as Councillor. On behalf on the Council and everyone in the village, I would like to thank Nick for his decades of service to the village.

PRECEPT:

In January, the Parish Council requested a £10,800 precept for 2023/2024, which East Suffolk Council confirmed would be a zero percent increase on Council Tax bills.

PLANNING:

Planning Applications are considered in the Parish Council Planning Meetings. Our comments can be viewed on the East Suffolk Council website.

The Council has reviewed and commented on numerous planning applications. As you would expect, most applications are straightforward and relate to peoples' need to build and develop their family homes.

HIGHWAYS:

Highways maintenance and repair of dilapidated highway signage is an on-going issue with the County Council. We continue to hold our county councillor to account, and we are aware that he shares our frustrations.

The outcome of our discussions with Suffolk Highways and the primary school to provide some form of crossing was disappointing. Whilst the traffic surveys indicated that there was a sufficient traffic to warrant some form of intervention, the fact that so many parents accompanied their children to school (because the A1120 & Laxfield Road are so busy at school drop-off time) actually counted against our case!

There are other options that we can explore, and the Council continue to improve road safety around the school.

A resident's suggestion to link the paved footpath along Saxtead Road with the lane leading to Maypole Green is still being explored with Suffolk Highways and the adjacent landowners.

The footbridge onto the Village Green was replaced in April, procured from Roger Gladwell at Maypole Green. Replacement posts around the Coronation Oak in The Square have been sourced from another local supplier, TreeIncarnate at Dennington Lodge.

WEB SITE:

Our website, <http://www.dennington.suffolk.cloud> averages around 300 visitors to the site every month.

It contains all of the relevant Parish Council information including minutes, agendas, reports, as well as useful village organisation contacts. There are various links within the site, where you can connect to the School, Village Hall and church web sites, along with an events diary.

Shirley Cunningham is doing a fantastic job in making sure our web site is kept up to date; If you have any newsworthy items, forthcoming events or matters of local interest which can be placed on our web site please contact Shirley.

We did investigate whether there were any benefits to adopting a .gov.uk domain name for our website, as other parish councils have started to do; and we decided that the current arrangements provide the best value for the village.

VILLAGE NEWSLETTER:

The high-quality newsletter is produced by the Village Hall Trustees. Four times a year the newsletter helps organisations in the village to broadcast their news and events to the residents.

SUMMARY:

Finally, I'd like to thank every who helped lead the Church service, decorate the Green, organise the picnic and came along to the Big Eat Out on Sunday 7th May, to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III. It was a great afternoon on the Village Green, the church bells provided some light entertainment, children and adults alike climbed up and down the Belfry to appreciate the fantastic views from the roof. Even the Sun decided to make a rare appearance!

It has been a great pleasure and a privilege to have served you over the last year and I thank you all for the support that you have offered.

Matt Lunn
19th May 2023