

# WILLINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT

2020 - 2021



## PARISH COUNCILS – WHO ARE THEY?

Parish and Town Councils are the level of local government closest to the needs of local people. Parish and Town councils are created in law and are required to act within the laws by exercising the powers and functions which have been conferred on them by Acts of Parliament. However, these laws give the Parish and Town council a wide remit within which to improve the lives of their local community. The Council collects a precept each year (a sum collected with the council tax each year from the householders in the parish) specifically intended to maintain and improve facilities and services for local people. The precept for 2020/2021 is £130,000 an increase of slightly over 1% per household.

Parish and Town Councils are the least bureaucratic and the cheapest form of local government in existence. All sums collected are invested in the needs of the Parish itself. They are elected bodies and as such are responsible and responsive to their local electorate.

### WILLINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Willingham Parish Council is made up of 15 Councillors all of whom are volunteers. The period of office of a Councillor is normally 4 years, but if they have been co-opted or elected at a bye-election, they will serve until the next normal election. Due to the Northstowe Governance Review the council held their elections a year early in May 2021. The term of office will run for 5 years to bring the next election in line with District Council Elections.

The Council currently employ four part time members of the staff:

The Clerk – Mandy Powell

The Compliance Administrator – Annika Osborne

The Finance Officer – Sarah Rutherford

The Litter Picker – Mark Mumford

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## CHAIR'S REPORT

A year ago, we were in what turned out to be just the first of three lockdowns. I must start this year's report by thanking the organisers and volunteers of the Willingham Hub who helped with shopping, delivering prescriptions, and the food bank. We are now mostly accustomed to the situation with online services able to cope so the Hub is dormant, but ready to react again if needed.

The Parish Council office has managed the difficult circumstances with their usual efficiency and good cheer, dealing magnificently with online meetings, closed facilities, risk assessments and constantly changing Government guidelines. I am extremely grateful for their support.

The year ended with almost unprecedented rainfall on top of already saturated ground, and this resulted in flooding in several parts of the village along with foul water on the Green. We have arranged a meeting with Anglian Water and other relevant bodies, due to take place in early April, to understand the root causes and try to prevent future recurrences.

Since the 1<sup>st</sup> April, the new Parish boundary has come into effect, triggered by the creation of Northstowe Town Council. I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome the new residents to Willingham.

Despite everything, the council has been busy this year and we have been working on many initiatives. These include:

### Highways

- Signs warning drivers to slow down on West Fen Road where children are playing were ordered last year and we are still waiting for them to be installed.
- The A14 Parish Legacy Grant team are still working on providing a footpath to the Community Orchard. It seems all we are now waiting for is the County Council to do the work.
- We were once again unsuccessful with our Local Highways Improvement bid to add a 40mph buffer zone to the entrance to the village on the B1050 from Earith. This despite what would appear to be overwhelming evidence of the need based on the speed and volume of traffic, even during lockdown, and a great deal of work by Councillor Harris. We are pressing the County Council and our MP to help us why we were scored below other apparently identical requests.

### Environment

- In May, the Council adopted a Climate Change and Sustainability Statement, with two lead councillors to monitor and guide all the council's decisions for their environmental impact.
- Many sandbags were filled and distributed on Boxing Day to residents affected by the flooding. We used the two tonnes of sand the Council held which has since been replenished with four tonnes.
- The oak trees planted on the Meadow Road site to commemorate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE Day did not fare well – suffering from both too little and then too much water. Those which did not survive have been replaced, hopefully with better prospects this time.

- A small plot of land off Black Pit Drove was donated to the village – now named Barton’s Field – for the use and enjoyment of all residents. We are very grateful for this new pleasant wooded and planted walking destination.

#### Social and Wellbeing

- The Parish Council fund 14 community lifeline units for residents who need them.
- The installation of a third defibrillator in the redundant phone box on the High Street gets ever closer.
- We currently donate £3,000 per year to Over Day Centre which supports many of our elderly residents.

#### Community

- Plans for the Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) had been submitted but after the Christmas flooding we have decided to withdraw them and think again about the location. We had, of course, consulted drainage experts but they failed to identify or predict the extent of the flooding.
- Two outdoor table tennis tables have been installed on the QE2 field.
- A covered bike shelter has been constructed by the pavilion.
- We provide free use of the recreation ground and pavilion for the youth football teams.
- Community Groups are given one free booking in the hall each year to help them raise funds for their groups.
- The Council has a grant budget each year which is allocated to applicants on a case by case basis in line with their grant policy.
- We provide financial support to Willingham News so that it can continue its excellent job of providing the magazine to every household each month.

The precept for 2021-2022 was agreed in November and is £135,000.

Derek Law  
Chair

## CEMETERY

Work was completed on the pillars and gates of the main entrance into the Cemetery on Church Lane, when Covid 19 lockdown restrictions were eased last summer.

The southern boundary of the Cemetery was cleared of excess weeds and overgrown shrubs last summer. This revealed several memorial stones and opened up the boundary, giving a clear view into the closed Churchyard.

Several trees which line the pathway to the current Burial area have had the lower branches pruned , making it easier for undertakers and mourners alike to avoid low branches.



A tree survey was carried out earlier in the year. This has given us information which can inform our decision making over the next few years as to any remedial tree work which is needed. We are then able to budget for this.



Cooperation between Willingham Parish Council and Saint Mary and All Saints' Church ensured that a Remembrance Sunday Service for the village could go ahead. As you may remember, we were under Covid 19 lockdown restrictions for the second time. The service was attended by about 36 members of the public and included a wide age range of people.

We are looking to find some suitable land in the area, to develop another Cemetery. This is because we have fewer burial plots as the years go by. In the meantime, we are looking to reinstate some grave spaces which are currently covered in shingle beside the north boundary Cemetery hedge.

I would like to thank Mark, who has taken on the task of emptying the smaller metal bins into the "Euro Bin" each week. This helps to keep the Cemetery tidy as do our current Grass Cutting firm.

Brenda Mansfield.  
Lead Councillor - Cemetery

## GREEN AND BOUNDARIES

The major issue for the Green has been the flooding and for the open areas it has been the fly tipping of rubbish.

### Meadow Road

Over 30 of the oak trees planted last year had some die due to first flooding and then drought. Some were destroyed by the ponies which were continually being fly grazed on the site. All the trees have all been replaced. The poppies sown were also disappointing with a low germination, probably due to the same flooding followed by drought. More seed will be sown this year. The dumping of large amounts of rubbish at the site entrance has been a constant occurrence. It is planned to extend the ditch to prevent access and replace the concrete blocks with a heavy-duty gate.

### The Green

Although the Green often floods and at one time there was a pond on the site this time it was not surface water but sewage from blocked pipes in Church Street. It was far worse and lasted much longer than the usual short-term flooding.

The Christmas Tree and the lights were installed before the flooding but the water entering the sunken low voltage power system meant the lights had to be switched off. The removal after 12th Night was also delayed.



### Barton Field

The newly gifted field added to the Parish land holdings is proving popular and tenders for fencing the North side and end are being sought. The South side may be done at a later date.

### Landing Ground

The area could do with fencing properly next to the Lode and the trees would benefit from some work. However, the site is so far from the village and little used that there are more pressing priorities.

### The Pound

The site of the Pound is well maintained entirely voluntarily by the adjoining householder with the grass regularly cut and spring flowers planted. The edges of the site were curbed many years ago to mark the boundary.

### Community Orchard

The Orchard is very popular and much used by dog walkers. The woodland trees are now well established. The excessive rainfall led to flooding in the entrance and extra limestone was used to bring up the levels. The actual grass area was crossed by duck boards which proved effective. They have been retained on site in case of future need.



### Long Pond

The water level has been a rarely seen high this winter but continued to flow. It is actual a watercourse flowing in from the South end and draining through a pipe at the Northern. The pond or Public Watering Place actually belongs to the village but South Cambs DC have always helped with the maintenance.



### Fly Tipping

This has been a great problem this year and whole lorry loads have been dumped at Meadow Road and on most of the Byways. The Old Causeway at the Priest Lane end has been particularly targeted. Every monthly inspection of all the tracks ends in a long list for the Clerk to forward onto South Cambs DC to remove. There have also been several heaps that have been set on fire which makes it difficult to deal with as the plastic often melts and then congeals around the other refuse. Presumably, this torching is to destroy any evidence and make possible identification and therefore prosecution very difficult.

Ray Manning  
Lead Councillor – Green and Boundaries

## **LEISURE AND AMENITIES**

### Covid 19

We were forced to close the QEII field to the public on government advice in the last week of March 2020 but reopened it in July as soon as we were able, with a list of restrictions displayed, and it has remained open since then. The pavilion was closed for much of this year, again to follow government guidance, but reopened in a very limited way between August and November. We are grateful to Willingham Wolves for putting in place the various measures required to allow this. I am pleased to say that the recreation ground has remained open continuously and been well used (with of course appropriate safe distancing), by residents.

### Recreation Ground

#### *Flooding*

This has been a particularly wet winter and on the night of 23 December almost the whole of the lower recreation ground became flooded, and pools of standing water did not completely disappear until February. Even then, the ground was so wet that further rain resulted in puddles into March. The lode also became very high and remained high for much of January. The ends of the drainage pipes under the rec were silted up, preventing them functioning, which added to the problem. This silt has mostly now been cleared (thanks are due to Willingham Wolves) and a contractor has been appointed to jet the entire length of the pipes in late Spring. Before this latest flooding incident, we had agreed with the Wolves football club to share the cost of verti-draining the lower rec in spring 2021, which will also help with drainage.

Regarding the high level of water in the lode we met two representatives of the Environment Agency to talk about clearing the vegetation and steps to reduce the silting on the rec side.

### *Formal games*

Normal league football matches were suspended but the Wolves managed to continue training and play some friendly matches in the autumn. Likewise, the Bowls Club did not have any formal league matches but were able to arrange informal roll ups. Sadly, it was not possible for there to be any cricket matches.

### *Lack of pitch space*

We are delighted that the Wolves have become so successful that they will be fielding 14 teams next season, from under 7s to under 17s including boys and girls teams, and also mens and ladies teams. But there are not enough pitches, and the club will need to rent pitches elsewhere, which is a sad state of affairs for our village club. The 'call for sites' process for the Greater Cambridge Local Plan brought this issue of the lack of formal sports pitch space into focus. According to the documentation, for a village the size of Willingham there should be about 8 hectares, but we only have 4.2. Three of the 'sites' identified for possible development are close enough to the current rec to be very suitable as sports pitches. We are in discussion with SCDC on what can be done. We are also making sure that Willingham's plight is recognised in forthcoming strategic reviews such as future master planning approaches for the New local Plan and updated Playing Pitch Strategy.

### *Bike shelter*



It is important to encourage more cycling in Willingham, and the need to provide cycle parking as part of the MUGA planning application provided impetus to look at this. With section 106 money from Brickhills, covered parking for 12 bikes was installed next to the pavilion in March.

### *Car parking*

The Parish Council continues to press Highways regarding the very poor state of the parking area outside the pavilion. Planings from local road resurfacing works may be delivered for us to spread but this is only a very temporary solution.

### *Floodlights*

These are currently a problem: one that was not working was repaired in October but still did not work and shortly thereafter they all failed, tripping the trip switch. The soft ground following the wet winter has delayed repair as a cherry picker cannot be brought onto the rec.

### *Litter*

One extremely disappointing aspect of the lockdown and increased use of open spaces such as the rec and the QEII field has been the enormous amount of litter left behind. Bins were regularly emptied, and the council's litter picker did a really excellent job, but it is incomprehensible why people do not take their litter home if there is nowhere safe to dispose of it.

### West Fen Road 'Children playing' signs

I reported this time last year that in August 2019 the Parish Council had applied under the Private Local Highways Improvement scheme to erect, at its own expense, 'children playing' signs on West Fen Road near the QEII field and the rec to alert traffic, which often speeds along that section



despite the poor and narrow carriageway. We heard informally in February 2020 that we had been successful. At the time of writing these have still not been put in place by Cambridgeshire Highways, despite numerous reminders.

### QEII Field

This continues to be a very popular and well-used facility, and on most days, even in bad weather, there are usually well distanced carers and children enjoying the space, especially during the lockdown periods. The trees planted by WAG are maturing and look very attractive. We are currently investigating the possibility of turning the unused space alongside the lode into a wildflower meadow, but this will take a few years as first the ground needs to be prepared.

New to the field this year are two outdoor table tennis tables, paid for from section 106 money from the Brickhills development. They were installed in January so have not yet had much use.

We have employed Reids Playground Maintenance this year to make minor repairs to various pieces of equipment. They also repaired some of the sunken parts of the surface in the toddler area and covered them with brightly coloured rubber mulch. A few remain that will be dealt with next year.



### Bowls Club

The Council has agreed to help support the Bowls club, which is currently struggling for funds, with a payment towards the annual maintenance of the Green.

### Pavilion

The outside of the pavilion was repaired and repainted in May and it looked very smart, so it was disappointing that covid restrictions meant that we were not able to show it off to visiting teams.

We have started to look into providing a water fountain/ bottle filling station at the pavilion to discourage single-use plastic bottles, but are still assessing how this can be made vandal-proof.

### MUGA

The planning application for the MUGA was submitted to SCDC in October and the Council is very grateful to local resident Ian Ross for drawing up the 22-page design statement, plus six appendices. So it was deeply disappointing to see the area designated for the MUGA under water during the late-December floods, but this did alert us to that possibility, and with climate change it seems that such weather is likely to occur more frequently. Since the proposed sand-dressed surface would be ruined by water ingress, we reluctantly temporarily withdrew the application and are looking again at possible sites that have minimal impact on the already too-small pitch area.



### Footpath to the Community Orchard

In July 2019, the Council was successful in its application for an A14 Legacy Grant for a proper footpath to the Community Orchard, which is currently dangerous, especially at the end by the orchard where there is now no path at all. There was then a long period when we heard very little apart from the lack of time that the A14 team had been able to spend on the schemes. We were, however, assured that it would go ahead in due

course. After further prompting we were finally told in February that there were problems with the scoping because of all the utility services and street furniture in the grass verge that is to be converted, but are still optimistic that the work will go ahead.

Linda King

Lead Councillor, Leisure and Amenities

## **HALLS**

The pandemic has affected us all and the activities we have been able to undertake, as a consequence the use of the halls in the village has been significantly reduced.

The main aim throughout has been to support regular users where possible and keep the buildings in good order. The new uPVC doors on all the halls have made the buildings more thermally efficient. This welcome addition coupled with new windows on the Ploughman Hall this has reduced the amount of maintenance in painting, repairing doors, windows, and replacing damaged wooden frames. This in turn has reduced some of the administration work required in doing so.



The second attempt to gain funding from the Carbon Zero initiative has been successful meaning the aspiration to replace the aged heating system will go ahead. Thanks to those councillors who saw this through whilst I worked through the pandemic at the hospital.

Unfortunately, the aspiration to source and place an external storage container and refurbish the bin store at the Ploughman hall has not been possible. This much needed storage space would see the meeting room in the Ploughman Hall reinstated for use as such and enable this space to be hired once more.

The Youth Trust and their users have been supported by the council to also continue to use the space where restrictions permit.

The public hall has not been used as much as normal by 1st Willingham scout group for their meetings as restrictions impacted their use of the building significantly. Much of their activity transferred to the outside space around the Ploughman Hall when permitted to meet.

We look forward to welcoming our regular users back to the halls and to see bookings increase as we are able to socialise again filling our void spaces with the sounds of people coming together again.

This is my last report, it has been a pleasure to be Hall's Lead, supported by the Deputy, the full council and the office team.

Whilst I may return some day, I will be focusing on my family for now and taking some rest after a very busy year in my professional capacity. I thank all the regular users, groups and those I have served. "

Rhys Tassell  
Lead Councillor, Halls

## **PLANNING**

The Planning Committee met 16 times during the year and considered 68 planning applications, 19 more than the previous year. All these meetings were virtual, conducted via Zoom, except one under delegated powers. The meetings averaged every 3 weeks and considered up to 9 applications. Members of the public are invited, though rarely attended. When they did, their considered comments enhanced the debate and the decisions reached.

Of these applications to be considered, 11 were in outline, 36 full, 2 for trees, 4 agricultural and 16 variations of conditions.

Apart from the Northstowe applications for large areas for which we make advisory comments, there were two applications for 4 houses, one agricultural change to 3 dwellings, and one for 2 dwellings in Willingham. Otherwise, there were only 5 new houses proposed. Most of the new applications were for extensions. There was one County application for gravel extraction to which we strongly objected.

The committee made no recommendation for 21 of the applications, mostly for applications for conditions to applications approved by SCDC previously. There were 29 recommended for approval and 18 for refusal. SCDC agreed with all those recommended for approval bar 2 and of those recommended for refusal, 2 were subsequently approved. Of those recommended for approval, 1 was refused on technical grounds by the District Council. The 30 remaining still "out for consultation" include 6 for Northstowe and 10 recent applications.

Neil Harris

Chair of Planning

## **ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY**

The council has had these important issues in mind for a while, and this year agreed to designate two councillors, Linda King and Valerie McKee, to be a liaison point for the council. The following statement was placed on the WPC website:

“Willingham Parish Council fully supports the urgent need to tackle the issues surrounding global warming and its impact on climate change. Within its limited resources the Council will do what it can to assist in the aim of ensuring the long-term sustainability of our environment.”

### Zero Carbon Communities grant

Our first act was to submit an application for an SCDC Zero Carbon Communities grant to replace the heating in the Ploughman Hall with a low-carbon alternative. Following an energy survey and advice from PECT (Peterborough Environment City Trust) in September an application was made for £13,000, half the cost of a radiative heating system. As well as reducing carbon emissions, it is expected save about £1600 a year. We are delighted to say that the application was successful, and work will commence once the other half of the cost is received from the S106 Rockmill End money.

The energy survey also recommended changing remaining light bulbs to LED and solar PV panels on the roof. We will look at these again when funds are available.

### Bike shelter

We have installed a covered bike shelter on the recreation ground, and hope that this might encourage more recreation ground users to cycle there.

### Impact Community Carbon footprint tool

We helped with the trialling of this tool, developed by the Centre for Sustainable Energy and the University of Exeter, and in March it went live. We have placed information about it in the Environment section on the WPC website. It provides carbon footprint information at parish level so anyone can check that of Willingham and compare it with other villages, towns or districts. It is not interactive and just provides broad-brush information, and its main function is to provide a starting

point for communities to look at their footprint. The website provides a lot of background information on footprints and ways of reducing them both on a parish and individual scale.

#### Plastic

One of our aims is to reduce single-use plastic and we have been investigating the installation of a water fountain/bottle filler outside the pavilion. However, so far it is proving difficult to find one that would be sufficiently vandal proof.

#### Wildflower meadow and flower tubs

In February we started thinking about two flower projects to improve the biodiversity in Willingham and add brightness. There is an overgrown area in the QEII field between the mown area and the lode and we are looking at turning this into a wildflower meadow. This is a long-term project as the soil needs to be carefully prepared. The project is going ahead with important input from the WAG Sustainability group, and we will be looking for grant money for this project. The other idea is to place tubs of flowers around the village, initially just a few on Parish Council owned land. The WAG group are submitting a Community Chest application to SCDC for the costs of tubs and soil/compost.

#### Liaison with the WAG Sustainability Group

The above flower projects are examples of the close cooperation between the Council and the WAG group, and we have also liaised with them on such issues as recycling, waste, carbon footprinting and other environment and sustainability issues.

Linda King  
Valerie McKee

## **GRANTS AWARDED 2020 – 2021**

Grants have been awarded to the following groups during the last 12 months:

<b>BENEFICIARY</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>
Bowls Club	£1,700.00
Over Day Centre	£3,000.00
Relate	£550.00
Community Roadwatch	£100.00
MAGPAS	£300.00
Willingham News	£1,564.67
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£7,214.67</b>

The Council continue to provide free use of the Pavilion and Recreation Ground for the Youth Teams in the village as well as reduced charges for community and education groups using the Ploughman Hall. Local Groups also benefit from the reduced cost of using the Public Hall which is currently leased to the User Committee and at present is mainly used by the Scout Group and the renovated section of the Ploughman Hall which is leased to Willingham Youth Trust.

In addition to the above, the Parish Council also pay for the provision of fourteen community lifeline monitors from the District Council for residents who need them.

## **PARISH COUNCIL ASSETS**

Property and Land belonging to the Parish Council

Ploughman Hall- West Fen Road, Willingham, Cambs, CB24 5LP

Date Purchased: Year 2000  
Purchase Price: £239,304  
Unique Property Reference No: 10003188724  
Map reference: E544872 N245256  
Freehold

The Ploughman hall houses the Council office and the sports hall and the Youth facility. The sports hall is available for hire by both regular users and one-off bookings. The Youth facility is leased to Willingham Youth Trust on a 10-year lease. This lease is due for renewal in 2025. The Parish Office is open to the public Monday to Thursday 10am to 1pm

Sports Pavilion – West Fen Road, Willingham, Cambridgeshire CB24 5LP

Date Purchased: 1972  
Purchase price: Not known  
Unique Property Reference No: 10033035727  
Map reference: E540185 N270670  
Freehold

The Sports pavilion is a facility provided by the Parish Council in conjunction with a grant awarded by the Sports Council for the use of local clubs and other users and consists of a small meeting room, kitchen and changing room facilities.

The Old Recreation Ground/Community Orchard – Earith Road, Willingham, Cambs

Date Purchased: Not known  
Purchase price: Not known  
Unique Property Reference No: Not known



Map reference: E540467 N: 271276  
Freehold

The Old recreation Ground is situated on Earith Road and was transformed into a community orchard in 2015 in conjunction with Willingham Action Group.

The Recreation Ground – West Fen Road, Willingham, Cambs, CB24 5LP

Dates Purchased: Dec 1997  
Purchase price: £26,271  
Unique Property Reference No: 10003197804  
Map reference: E540136 N270691  
Freehold

The Recreation Ground is situated behind the pavilion and the various sections of it were purchased between 1898 and 1997. The Recreation Ground contains several football pitches, cricket pitch and practice nets. The Recreation ground is available for hire by local groups and other users.

Jubilee/QEII Field – West Fen Road, Willingham, Cambs, CB24 5LP

Date Purchased: Not known  
Purchase price: £15,000  
Unique Property Reference No:10091623511  
Map reference: E540187 N270782  
Freehold

The QEII Field sits behind the Ploughman Hall and hosts a large play area which was significantly upgraded in 2015. The Field was registered with Fields in Trust in 2014.

Meadow Road Site – Meadow Road, Willingham, Cambs

Date Purchased: January 2015  
Purchase price: £50,000  
Unique Property Reference No: 100091654618  
Map reference: E541884 N270840  
Leasehold

The Parish Council purchased a 125-year lease in January 2015 for the site and it has been agreed to develop the site into a community woodland.

The Cemetery – Church Lane, Willingham, Cambs

Date Purchased: Not known  
Purchase price: Not known  
Unique Property Reference No: 100091611368  
Map reference: E540354 N270612  
Freehold

The Parish Council own and operate the cemetery in Church Lane which includes a War Memorial.

The Pound – Pound Lane, Willingham, Cambs

Date Purchased: Not known  
Purchase price: Not known  
Unique Property Reference No: Not known  
Map reference: E540172 N270603  
Freehold

The Landing Ground – Bridge Farm, Earith Road, Willingham, Cambs

Date Purchased: Not known  
Purchase Price: Not known  
Unique Property Reference No: 100091420856 (Bridge farm)  
Map reference: E540633 N273279  
Freehold

The Green – Green Street, Willingham, Cambs

Date Purchased: Not known  
Purchase Price: Not known  
Unique Property Reference No: 10090708791  
Map reference: E540666 N270486  
Freehold

The village Green is located on the junction of Green Street and Church Street. There is a village pump and a village sign located on the Green. The Green is the location for the fair during Feast Week in October.

Public Hall – The High Street, Willingham, Cambs

Date Purchased: 1896  
Purchase Price: Donated  
Unique Property Reference No: 10003189029  
Map reference: E540237 N270406  
Freehold

The Public Hall is owned by the Parish Council and is leased on a 10-year lease to the Public Hall User Committee. The lease is due for renewal in 2025

Public Open Space Pyrethrum Way – Pyrethrum Way, Willingham, Cambs

Date Purchased: Not known  
Purchase Price: Not known  
Unique Property Reference No: Not known

Map reference: E540617 N270120  
Freehold

The Council adopted and maintains the public open space on Pyrethrum Way

Long Pond – Rampton Road, Willingham

Date Purchased: Not known  
Purchase Price: Not known  
Unique Property Reference no: Not Known  
Map reference: E540874 N270081  
Freehold

Barton's Field – Black Pit Drove, Willingham

Date Purchased: Donated February 2021  
Purchase price: Not applicable  
Unique property reference:  
Map reference: E540751 N269069  
Freehold

The field was donated by a parishioner and is used as open public space for parishioners. It has a small wooded area top and bottom and several fruit trees planted throughout the site. Pedestrian access only is via Black Pit Drove

## **DISTRICT COUNCIL REPORT**

This report covers the last 12 months of activity by your District Council and local Councillors; a year dominated (of course) by the coronavirus pandemic. SCDC has been highly active in the local government response to the pandemic and has responded quickly and flexibly to the changing circumstances. Significant numbers of Council officers have been redeployed from their usual duties to those dealing directly and urgently with the Covid response, such as the Business Recovery team. Although this has meant some disruption to normal council services, most have been delivered in a timely way and hopefully local residents have not been too severely affected.

### Covid related grants to businesses and discretionary/hardship grants

The aforementioned Business Support Team at SCDC has been supporting all local businesses, big and small, through our website, our business newsletter and by direct contact by our expert business support team; we have advised a staggering 2000 businesses over the past 12 months. We have paid out a total of £10,570,066 in Government business grants to 4,447 local businesses since last November and £3,550,204 in discretionary/hardship grants. We are awaiting details of what further monies we can expect and hence what activities and businesses we will be able to help going forward.

### Community Volunteers

One of the most heartening things that has come out of the pandemic has been the terrific volunteer community response. It was estimated that, at the height of the Covid emergency, over 4,500 people were engaged across South Cambridgeshire in helping their fellow citizens get through

the worst of the crisis. Willingham was blessed with an excellent group, which we at SCDC thought was an exemplar – well organised and effective. This organisation was led by residents Stephanie Prior and Katja Gauci and we would like to record our thanks to them for their excellent work.

Now that there appears to be an end to the lockdown and the vaccination programme is reducing the infection risk to us all, SCDC is looking forward at how the community response might be continued into the recovery period. In the coming weeks, council officers will be contacting volunteers to ask them for their views on this. It is appreciated that many will be very tired and looking forward to a break and this is understandable. It may be that a different set of residents step up and continue the work. Whatever the volunteers decide, SCDC will support them in whatever way it can.

#### Mobile/Community Wardens

In the last 12 months SCDC has increased the number of district Mobile/Community Wardens schemes by 7 and 20 are now operating across the district. By supporting people in their homes, the wardens help people to live in their own homes for longer. Willingham's scheme, managed by Age UK, started at the end of 2020 with warden Joanne Twinn (07812 496002). Places are available and more information can be found here: <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/community-development/mobile-warden-scheme/>

#### Flooding

Although the Covid response has played a huge part of all our lives in the last 12 months, there have also been other very notable events, as well as the 'normal' casework. One of these notable events was the flooding that we experienced over the Christmas period and early part of 2021. The exceptional amount of rain that fell during this period tested the drainage systems of our villages to the limit and beyond. Whilst the local authority response to the emergency worked as planned, as one of the category 1 responders SCDC is in talks with Anglian Water, the Environment Agency, the County Council and Internal Drainage Boards and parish councils to see how our joint response can be improved. There will also be a review of riparian watercourses to make sure that they are not obstructed and an impediment to drainage. SCDC will seek to facilitate local emergency plans that tap in to local knowledge including that of Parish Councils.

#### Traffic and speeding

The other big issue in Willingham village is, of course the heavy, and often speeding, traffic that flows through the village. Although this is the responsibility of Cambs County Council Highways Department and not SCDC, we are very aware of the inconvenience and irritation that this causes. The election for the County Council seats takes place on 6<sup>th</sup> May and we will lobby and/or work with whoever is elected to try to get mitigation measures put in place. That statement is also true of blocked road gullies and potholes.

#### Construction of new council housing

We have a policy of increasing the number of council properties available for people on lower incomes and, we have built 66 new council homes in the last 12 months (the target was 50). These are built to a high specification and some of the properties have solar panels and air-source heat-pumps.

### SCDC 5 Year Housing Land Supply

Local planning authorities, like SCDC, must demonstrate that they are on track to deliver the minimum number of new homes (in the projected five-year period) that the national government has set. Widely known as the 5-year housing land supply (5YHLS) the failure of the previous Conservative administration to demonstrate one led to developers bombarding the council with speculative applications, many of which got approved at appeal and Willingham was one of the villages that suffered because of this failure. We are delighted to be able to report that the 5YHLS figure for Greater Cambridge (South Cambs and Cambridge City) has recently been reassessed and it now stands at 6.1 years. This means that we can apply our Local Plan policies for affordable housing, standards, sustainable locations, green belt and place-making without the fear of speculative and unsustainable development. Good news indeed!

### Being 'Green to our core'

One of the priorities for the present administration at SCDC is a commitment to being 'Green to our core'. In early 2021 we released details of our 'Doubling Nature' strategy in which we seek to increase wildlife-rich habitats and the tree canopy and improving access to green spaces. Some of the other projects that we have in the pipeline have, inevitably, been delayed by the coronavirus pandemic but we have still delivered on most of our commitments, such as:

All SCDC street lighting is to be replaced by low energy LED lights. This is nearing completion and should give a reduction of 60% of energy usage and a commensurate saving in parish councils' street-lighting energy bills.

We have completed an audit of the energy efficiency of existing council housing stock and will soon begin a campaign of improvement, beginning with enhanced insulation for the poorest performing properties. This will have the dual benefit of reducing carbon emissions and helping council tenants with their fuel bills. Where possible, Council House refurbishment will include air or ground-source heat pump systems, accompanied by better glazing.

The 'greening' of South Cambs Hall is the main project that has been delayed by Covid, but it should be completed in the coming year. This will retrofit renewable energy generation and energy-saving measures with the objective of reducing by up to 50% the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> used to heat and light the council's home (with commensurate cost-savings too).

We have purchased an electric bin lorry – one of the first local authorities to do so – and with an option to purchase others. The performance of the vehicle is still being evaluated but, so far, it has exceeded expectations. These vehicles have a much higher upfront cost but running costs are considerably lower and should be cost neutral over the vehicles' lifespan. We shall be considering other greener vehicle options including hydrogen fuel-cell, and there are plans to install a solar generation park (planned 2021-22) as a renewable source of electricity to charge the vehicles, which will add to the financial case as well as the considerable environmental one.

Our Zero-Carbon Communities Grant scheme has been very successful. In the last year, almost £100,000 of grant funding has been made available to 17 parish council and community group projects to help them with carbon reduction and energy efficiency measures. The scheme for 2021-22 opens on 10 May 2021 and funding will be available for community buildings, tree Planting and other initiatives to reduce carbon emissions. <https://www.scams.gov.uk/nature-and-climate-change/zero-carbon-communities/zero-carbon-communities-grant/>

We are very much looking forward to resuming our usual monthly surgeries once the Covid restrictions are lifted but we are always available on the phone or by email and we try to respond quickly.

Dawn and Bill

Dawn Percival & Bill Handley, April 2021 [Cllr.handley@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:Cllr.handley@scambs.gov.uk) 01954 200287

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## COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT

27 million people watched the Prime Minister announce the first lockdown on Monday 23 March 2020. Activating our regular emergency planning training, Cambridgeshire County Council immediately hit the “pandemic” button and converted itself into a social support organisation. I have not been comfortable trumpeting the county council contribution, preferring to emphasize the extraordinary team effort that resulted from all of us working together, regardless of background, organisation or affiliation, towards the sole outcome of making lives better: as one of the volunteers put it perfectly, “bearing each other’s burdens”. The county council resumed holding meetings (online) in May.

Up to 55mm of rain fell, in various locations, in less than 24 hours between 23 and 24 December 2020. The Environment Agency declared water levels their highest since 1998. We received over 750 reported incidents, with just over 300 involving water inside homes. Storm water surcharge of sewerage systems caused widespread problems of drains backing up.

Air pollution tool: enter a postcode and house number at [addresspollution.org](http://addresspollution.org) and get a report on levels of three pollutants: fine particulates known as PM2.5, larger particulates called PM10, and NO2.

The Planning White Paper was published in August, proposing a more rules-based approach to planning permission, based on three land categories - Growth, Renewal, Protect. I circulated a “Summer Reading” piece every other day that month. After a lifetime in practice Robert Carnwath CVO, a Justice of the Supreme Court from 15 April 2012 to 18 March 2020, summed up the planning system in three words as “robust, but over-cluttered, and under-resourced”.

Luke Hall, Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government, wrote to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Board Members about the £100million housing programme: “I have concluded that the programme has made insufficient delivery progress and that the value for money being achieved is below our expectations. I will not be extending the timeframe or continuing to fund the programme on its current basis.” This is really galling, because Stephen Hills, the former



Housing Director who negotiated this part of the devolution deal, would have put this money to good use in accelerating “affordable housing” delivery in South Cambridgeshire.

At the county council budget meeting, the Leader Steve Count proposed spending £7million to stop the B1050 sinking into the river. The government revealed its national bus strategy and promised to support the proposals to the tune of £3billion. The Department for Transport is exploring an all-ways junction at Girton as part of RIS3. East-West Rail is consulting on routes from Bedford to Cambridge.

Heralding a step change in cycling and walking, and seizing the unique opportunity provided by the pandemic, the government’s “Gear Change” brings £2bn of new investment, Local Transport Note 1/20 setting new standards for cycling infrastructure, and Active Travel England with a new national cycling and walking commissioner. And an Office for Health Promotion to get us to eat better and move more.

Cambridge Biomedical Campus launched its 2050 vision, to be up there with Kendall Square in Boston Massachusetts. Our knowledge-based economy is in competition with other parts of the world. A recent survey by Cambridge Ahead of under-40-year-olds has identified close access to green space as a top priority for those who live and work in the area. Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire are jointly preparing their next Local Plan, to be submitted 2022. The government is preparing an Ox-Cam Arc (Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire) Spatial Framework.

Tim Wotherspoon

Cambridgeshire County Councillor

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