

Chair's Report – 2022 Annual Parish Assembly

A Parish Council is the most basic form of government. By basic I mean of course that it is the very lowest level of government. Or to put it in a more positive way, the first layer of government, which any ordinary person can interact with. It is, in a way, also the most accessible. Its councillors are local and approachable. The meetings here are open to all, and we are generous in allowing public contributions. And, I hope, many a vacancy on the council has been filled for all of these reasons.

The period since the last Parish Assembly has therefore been a difficult one. I will not labour the point about “unprecedented times”. What I say is that thanks to our dedicated councillors and staff both inside and out, Coggeshall Parish Council was able to continue to function and serve the interests of the people of this parish during this period. For that I thank you all.

It was also a period of time that saw considerable change within the council: the departure of two Chairs, two Vice Chairs and two Clerks. I will take this moment to thank all six of them for their services, unique and interesting in their own ways, during their time with the Council.

While we spent considerable time managing the effects on local government of the pandemic, the Council continued to function and in this sense we may count a number of successes.

Chief among these is the adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan: this vital piece of work will aim to safeguard our village development in the future, and ensure such decisions remain in the hands of local people. Also: that those who visit the village, rather than come to stay, are aware of what we and local businesses have to offer: our tourist leaflet is to be considered at this month's Parish Council meeting. Another of these successes is the refurbishment of the playground on the Rec, which came to fruition this year and is a much used amenity by locals. A big thanks must go to the Big Park Project for completing this and we look forward to working with them in future.

The future is very much in the mind of this council, the creation of a Climate Change Committee, which will look at how we as a community can contribute to the maintenance of our local, national, and international environment is a welcome addition and I look forward to its first meeting.

The past is also in our minds as a council, as we seek to preserve the best of the old while considering the new. To this end the Council threw its weight behind the campaign to save Nunn's bridge. This bridge is an asset to the community, bringing together our shared history, the importance of access to open spaces, our connection with the river and, dare I say it, when threatened, bringing our community together. Coggeshall Parish Council played a very small part in saving this bridge. The majority of the effort being made by members of the community.

In a way that is what this council is about: facilitating local people to maintain, enhance, change and preserve our local community as we would want it be. Whether that part played is small or large, whether it is instant or takes time and consideration, this council will always be ready to serve.

Cllr Ian Hagger
Chair of Coggeshall Parish Council
May 2022