

Felsham

Annual Parish Meeting

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Tuesday 13th May 2025 7.00pm Felsham and Gedding Village Hall

Present: 7 parishioners; Cllr Garrod – Chairman, Suffolk County Cllr Otton, Housing Enablement Officer Sue Downs, Parish Clerk

Apologies: Mr Phil Cockell, Cllr Kearney

- 1 Cllr Garrod welcomed everyone to the meeting
- 2 A short presentation on Community Led Housing was made by Sue Downs from Community Action Suffolk
- 3 Apologies were received from: Rev. Sharon Potter, Mr Phil Cockell, Cllr Mark Tavernor, Cllr Paul Kearney
- 4 The Minutes of last years meeting, held on 14th May 2024 were received, approved and signed by Cllr Garrod.
- 5 Suffolk County Cllr Penny Otton gave her report later in the meeting, and which appears below. She highlighted the consternation occasioned by the changes to Suffolk libraries provision. Services will now be run by Suffolk County Council and the Mobile Service is reported to be 'safe'. She also highlighted Central Government's decision Reorganise of Local Government, replacing County and District and Borough Councils with a Unitary Authority system and also putting in place a Combined Mayoral Authority for Norfolk and Suffolk. Cllr Otton expressed delight that the Village Sign, funded by her Locality Budget had now been finished.
Mid Suffolk District Cllr Nicky Willshere had sent her report, which appears below
- 6 Reports were received from the following on behalf of Parish Organizations, and appear below:

Parish Council	Cllr Simon Garrod (Chairman)
St Peter's Felsham & St Mary's Gedding	Mrs Patricia Wilson
Royal British Legion	Karen Fynn
Felsham Village Hall	Mrs Beverley Williams
Community Stores & Post Office	Mr James Morgan
Felsham Charity Trustees	Mrs Patricia Wilson
Felsham Playing Field	Cllr Simon Garrod
- 7 No further reports were received
- 8 Requests were made for reports to be forwarded to the Clerk
- 9 There being no further business, the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 20.05hrs

Signed _____ (Chairman) Dated _____

THE REPORTS FOLLOW ON THE NEXT PAGE

Suffolk County Cllr Penny Otton: Thedwastre South Annual Report 2025

Suffolk's Library Service

At Cabinet on 18th March 2025, the council administration voted to bring Suffolk's libraries back in-house at the end of the current contract for the library on 31 May. Suffolk Libraries, who have held the contract since the service was divested in 2012, were the only bidder for the contract, but negotiations broke down

The proposal to do this was passionately opposed not just by Suffolk Libraries, but also Suffolk residents including Friends of Thurston library and myself and the many volunteers and Friends groups who work for and raise money for libraries in their communities. **Richard Fawcett was amazingly helpful in highlighting many of the discrepancies between SCC and Suffolk libraries. My group then asked for the decision to be examined at the scrutiny meeting 29th April. Unfortunately this was rejected by the monitoring officer**

Devolution and Local Government Reorganization

Since the publication of the government's White Paper in December, Suffolk councils have been scrambling to develop their proposals for reorganizing local government. Under the new system, Norfolk and Suffolk will have a joint mayor (with elections held in May 2026) leading a mayoral authority replaced by unitary councils –that undertake all local services like education, adult care, waste collection, housing and highways. Opposition councillors, like my group are less convinced that one massive council would bring decision-making closer to the communities, which is what devolution is supposed to enable. Submit detailed proposals in September, with a decision from government by the end of the year It is likely that councillors for the new council/s would be elected by Suffolk residents in May 2027, a year after the mayoral elections.

Motions

My group passed three successful motions at council over the year:

1. In May 2024, we proposed that the council lobby the government for proper, long-term funding for local councils and support policies to address the long-term funding of adult social care.
2. In July 2024, my group tabled a motion that the council would do everything it could to avoid delays with local infrastructure funded by developer contributions. but our motion acknowledged that the design and programming of works by Suffolk County Council was also often delayed. **I named Thurston as a prime example!!**
3. In December 2024, my group successfully proposed a policy for the council of 'Roofs before Rural' regarding solar panels. The motion noted that the new Labour government was proposing to triple the amount of solar power in the UK by 2030 and set out the council's position that rooftop solar was preferable to 'solar farms' and for the government to seek assurances Suffolk's best quality agricultural land would be protected.

My group also proposed the following motions which were voted down by the Conservative administration at council:

In October 2024, my group tabled a motion to revise the Highways Maintenance Operating Procedure so that repairs to footways and pavements would be prioritized in areas with heavy footfall, or where a recent fall had been reported. This motion wa

state of Suffolk's Roads

In July 2024, a report was brought to Scrutiny Committee which looked into the condition of Suffolk's roads, the amount spent by the council to repair them and how repair works were prioritised. Works are prioritised by the council's Highway Maintenance Operational Plan, which sets out the parameters for repair work and the order of priority repairs. Unsurprisingly, main roads and roads which have a lot of traffic are prioritised over quieter roads which do not. The result of the damage to the roads by work on the A14 didn't help and despite promising National Highways DID NOT recompense SCC

THURSTON RAIL CROSSING

I cannot politely express my frustration that still we do not have a decision to go forward with this despite constantly asking whats going on.

ROAD WORKS IN THURSTON AND BEYTON

I cannot tell you how many times I have had to contact SCC highways, MidSuffolk planners and developers and contractors about the numerous road works done or more importantly NOT done .

A14 OVERNIGHT ROAD WORKS; I have made sure National Highways liase with SCC about and local road closures, I,m sure drivers will not be using the correct diversion.

THURSTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE;

Be assured I have kept in touch to make sure the DFE is still working on the plans. I am meeting the head teacher on 6th May.

But it is still not confirmed if the 6th form will go to the Thurston site Scc gave the permission for the new 60 parking spaces

SIGN REPAIR AND REPLACEMENT; at the request of Gedding parish meeting I have arranged and paid for the junction warning post and the 30mph roundel on Drikstone road near Hazel cottage

LOCALITY FUND; pleased to help with cost of new Village sign many years ago

SIX BELLS APPLICATIONS happy to support the parish and residents to get these refused

Budget 2025-26

In February 2025, the council voted to adopt its proposed budget for the 2025-26 financial year. This included approving a maximum rise in council tax this year of 4.99%, including the 2% social care precept for adult care. Cost pressures for the council include care purchasing for adult social care, Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and placements for children in care. 26, the debt will cause a £6.8m cost pressure for the council.

Improving Services for Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND)

Following the poor Ofsted/CQC inspection report published in January last year, the council has been trying to improve SEND services. In May last year they produced and submitted a SEND Strategy, and in June they produced a Priority Action Plan for improvement, including extra funding of £4.4m to recruit more staff, including Educational Psychologists.

Update on Flooding

Following the Storm Babet flooding in October 2023, the council announced it was investing an extra £1m in investigating the causes of flooding and taking action to prevent further floods.. A year later, in November 2024, the council announced it would be allocating a further £1.5m from its reserves to deal with recommendations made in the 10 investigation reports published so far.

I would like to congratulate Beyton on the work they have done and paid for their own investigations and repair work

MY LOCALITY BUDGET. Pleased to have been able to help with the cost of new VASIGNS

Warm Homes in Suffolk

- For the Suffolk Loft Insulation Offers, residents should visit <https://highloft.co.uk/pages/suffolk-council-200-loft-insulation-contribution> and fill in the form to receive a discount code
- For the interest free loan scheme, homeowners can check to see if their property has an existing Energy Certificate with an EPC band and record of their property size at gov.uk/find-energy-certificate. They can apply for the vouchers by visiting suffolkenergyassessment.co.uk. This scheme started in November and vouchers are being distributed on a first-come, first-served basis.

Mid Suffolk District Council Annual Parish Report – Felsham 2025

Councillor Nicky Willshere
Rattlesden Ward

Email: Nicky.Willshere@Midsuffolk.gov.uk
Mobile: 07793610542

During the past year there have been considerable changes following the general election last year. There have been impacts to our District Council on several areas.

The joint local plan is now having to be revisited following an increase in the housing allocations given to Mid Suffolk (increase 37%)

Suffolk and Norfolk are now one of the first areas in the country to be part of Local Government Review and Devolution.

Luckily the weather was kinder this autumn / winter and we did not have the same flooding as last year. Considerable work has been done across the parishes previously impacted by floods to mitigate future problems.

The A14 finally reopened and reduced the pressure on the parishes but the progress to restoring the damage has been slow.

There has been closer working with the community's team to resolve local issues, such as securing grass cutting timetables, and getting work to community areas completed.

The ongoing planning frustrations at the Six Bells now appear to be over, I was able to assist in objecting to the applications at the Planning Committee.

I have been able to assist Felsham with the purchase of the new Beacon from my Locality Allowance £1200.

I have assisted Gedding with a contribution towards a speed reduction device £1279

I have also been able to give advice and other grants available from Mid Suffolk and other sources to local groups.

I have attended District Planning meetings to support the parish in respect to applications that would deter from the conservation area.

Nicky Willshere

FELSHAM ANNUAL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – 2025

Good evening and welcome to The Annual Parish Council Meeting.

The Parish Council is now at the full compliment of 7 Councillors, myself, Ken Sparkes, Paul Kearney, Mark Tavenor, Jason Stringer, Beverley Williams and Karen Hubbard.

I would like to say a special thanks to Penny Otton, District Councillor and Nicky Willshere for the help, advice and fighting our corner. Also for the funding they give us for projects which we would not be able to complete without their help.

INTERNAL AUDIT

Andrew Conquest has carried out the Council's Internal Audit. I would like to thank Andrew for doing this for the Council.

COUNCIL PRECEPT

The Parish Council sets the Precept, its principal source of income to meet its spending requirements such as insurance, street lighting, dog and litter bin emptying, support for the village and organizations and the Parish Clerk. For the coming year the precept has remained unchanged £7,000,000 we have healthy reserves, should anything unexpected arise.

FELSHAM CHARITY

Thank you for the funding we were given from Felsham Charity, particularly for grass cutting.

PLANNING

We have many planning applications throughout the year, we are asked to comment on. Most of which we are willing to support or submit and no comment. There are some, which we do submit an objection to which recently has been the many applications, behind The Six Bells which are being rejected at either planning committee or on appeal.

VILLAGE PROJECTS

We now have a beacon installed on Upper Green. Thank you to Beverley for instigating the beacon and for Jason, Ken and their team for installing it.

KISSING GATE

There is a new kissing gate to be installed at the top of footpath 7. Thanks in advance to Paul, Ken and Jason for being responsible for installing this and for Ken storing the gate.

VILLAGE SIGN

We now have the village sign made and we are currently arranging a time for it to be erected.

SPEED SIGNS/SPEEDWATCH

We still need more volunteers for these, if you know of anyone who might help, please speak to Jason.

Finally I would like to say a special thanks to our Parish Clerk, Isabelle, for bearing with us and dealing with the huge amount of correspondence that she has to filter through.

Felsham and Gedding PCC report 2024

Felsham and Gedding operate together as one parish, so this report reflects both the churches and their activities during 2024.

Throughout the year 2 services a month are usually held in Felsham on a Sunday - our all age service which is known as 'Praise God Together' and an evening service, which takes the form of a Celtic-style communion in the summer in the church, and an informal evening which generally has a local guest speaker in the village hall during the winter. One of the speakers in 2024 was John Gillet, from Open Doors, an organisation that works with persecuted Christians around the world. 'Praise God Together' has maintained a core number of worshippers, and our evening service attendance varies. Easter and Christmas services were well attended.

Unfortunately the congregation at Gedding has dwindled to three or four per service, and the PCC has decided to request that the Church be made what is known as a 'Festival Church' with permission from the Bishop. This will mean that it will hold one or two 'festival' services a year, including Christmas.

In 2024 a new Churchwarden stepped up to join Mr Brian Deards, and Phil Cockell was elected at the APCM. This brought about a new level of activity within Felsham church as the PCC look to replace the flooring, followed by a relaunch of the bells project, plus the restoration of a clock on the tower! The PCC acknowledged that this means a lot of fundraising as well as seeking grants. The first quote for the floor has come in at £40,000.

In 2024 we were unsuccessful in finding a new treasurer, but there is hope on the horizon! We plan to merge the two churches bank accounts to create a new one under the name of Felsham and Gedding PCC, although this is proving to be a painful and timely exercise.

We were amazed at the generosity of the Village when we received a share in the fete proceeds in September for which we are thankful. We hope to have a bigger presence at this year's event should it go ahead.

The PCC is grateful for all the help that it receives from people within the community who help with keeping both our Church buildings in reasonably good condition, and for the flower arrangers and cleaners that keep them looking good for visitors. We are also grateful to Andrea Alderton for locking/unlocking Felsham Church, and to Bill Wyman for regularly sending his gardeners to keep Gedding Churchyard trimmed. Lastly, we thank the Felsham Charity for the generous grants that are given to Felsham Church, without which there would be a deep hole in the finances!

Rev Canon Sharon Potter
Rector
April 2025

Felsham & Gedding Royal British Legion report to the Annual Parish Meeting 2025.

Thank you for your invitation to attend and report our Branch activities at this Annual Parish meeting.

As with all other volunteer organisations, we have experienced dwindling numbers but, fortunately we have also managed to recruit some additional Members, holding our current Membership steady at 18.

Unfortunately, owing to health issues affecting Tina Smith and the recent sad passing of Edward Horrex, we are currently still without a Branch Standard Bearer and would be pleased to hear from any suitable candidate who feels able and willing to fulfil this most important role within the Branch and the wider community.

Despite this situation, we were, yet again, successful in winning the County Award for the most efficient and effective Small Branch, with our nomination being put forward to the Royal British Legion Annual Conference at Harrogate for consideration of the Lister Cup, which is a National award in recognition of the same criteria. We have successfully retained the Small Branch Award continuously since first awarded to us in 2017. This is a remarkable achievement, of which we are tremendously proud.

Our Branch is also held in high regard within the County of Suffolk, with a number of Members heavily involved in County and Group activities such as C Group Secretary, Suffolk County Committee and the sub Committee involved in producing a spectacular Festival of Remembrance and drumhead service at the APEX in Bury St. Edmunds each November. This event alone regularly donates an average of between £2,500 and £3,500 to the Annual Poppy Appeal.

As a Branch, we are very keen to be involved, where possible, in community activities. It was, therefore disappointing to learn at such a late stage that a number of events had already been planned to commemorate VE Day 80 in the village.

Nevertheless, we were able to attend the VE day lunch in the Six Bells on 8th May, where we conducted a rather successful raffle in aid of Branch funds. We are also most grateful to the Parish for their very generous donations raised from the proceeds of various village events.

Whilst VE Day was an important event to remember those who sacrificed their all during the conflict of World War 2, it is equally important to also remember those of the forgotten Army, who were subjected to such terrible atrocities for a further three months serving in the Far East and some not able to return home for a further 2 years due to their fragile health needing to build up their strength before they could travel.

VJ Day 80 is a particularly poignant time within Suffolk, as many of those serving and suffering in the Far East during those times were assembled from Suffolk Regiments.

Although any details of forthcoming events to commemorate VJ Day 80 in August are unclear at the moment, it would be appreciated if we were to be considered in some small way to make a contribution to those events.

Our Branch continues to remember those who gave their lives in the two World Wars, but sadly, war doesn't go away and donations from our fundraising go to support those in need from more recent conflicts such as Korea, Northern Ireland, The Falklands, Bosnia ,Iraq, Afghanistan and the Gulf wars.

We look forward very much to another successful year and, in doing so, invite anybody wishing to assist us with our quest, you would be warmly welcomed by the current Branch Members.

Karen Fynn,
Branch Chairman,
Felsham & Gedding Royal British Legion.



FELSHAM AND GEDDING VILLAGE HALL

Report to the Parish meeting to be held on Tuesday 13th May 2025 in the Village Hall

MANAGEMENT

The Committee, which runs the hall, has been well served in the year by;

David Simpson (Vice Chair) Jo Hutchings who keeps us all in order as secretary. Tricia Wilson, Mark Crawford, Brian Francis, Brian Deards, Mary Carter and Beverley Williams. At this year's AGM last month we were joined by Paul Entwistle who has been appointed Treasurer and Isabella Challis both relatively new to the village. Victoria Dillon, together with the support of her husband Paul, continues as Caretaker.

THE HALL'S USE

Carpet bowls and table tennis take place on alternate Wednesdays and film nights operate monthly as well as a monthly whist group. Those activities are part of the social club for which members now pay per £20 per annum. We now too have Yoga in the meeting room on Tuesday evenings.

The rock band still rehearses weekly and provides free entertainment at events in the Hall. On a musical theme, the Edmund Octet of 12 rehearse weekly on a Tuesday afternoon.

The churches, Parish Council and Gedding meeting, The Playing Field Committee and Village Friends are all community organisations which use the hall as well as the women's group – an alternative to the disbanded WI.

Private hire was enhanced last year with Bury St Edmunds Operatic and Drama Society hiring the hall; They have continued to use the hall in 2024/25. We also hosted the Centre Academy from Brettenham and had a number of children's parties.

However, we do have a task now to reconsider our booking arrangements from a number of perspectives, including the creation of a hiring agreement, instructions for Hall users and hiring terms given the current rates were set some years ago. A new rates chart is now available which became effective from 1st April including a childrens' party rate.

FUND RAISING

Our fundraising efforts this year have been exceptional again raising around £7800, spearheaded by the magnificent FAGENDS pantomime raising another record £4,500. A brilliant result

HALL FINANCES

A small surplus for the year to 31 March 2025 of £944 arose so we now have funds of £44874 of which £8362 is allocated to the general fund and £36512 is either designated or restricted for Improvements/extension.

We benefited in the year from donations of £637 of which £290 was in memory of John Garrod. We also received grants of £10,000 from MSDC towards the cost of the new floor and £450 from Gedding Meeting as well as £60 from the parish council towards the cost of the Christmas tree. (the tree lighting and carol singing is now an annual event.)

Our costs this year include an exceptional water charge caused by leakage as consequence of taps being left on. We are unable to recover the cost. This has been investigated and we are now installing non concussive taps to the sinks in the toilets. Our electricity charges too have increased through a combination of more usage and our new fixed rates coming on stream.

THE HALL DEVELOPMENT

The Hall's well-being is essential to the running of this marvellous facility. Its maintenance and development is a key focus. Over the years many improvements have been made and we have, together with the community shop, embarked on fundraising to not only improve the current facilities but – with the proposed extension - accommodate the community shop and a café to double as a meeting room facility and further storage facilities with the aim of creating more of a community hub.

A new floor in the main hall was duly installed at a cost of £12,114, £ 10,000 of which was covered by the MSDC grant. We are now about to replace the fire exit doors in the main Hall at a cost of about £3k and considering how we upgrade the kitchen and toilets for which plans have been drawn up.

With regard the extension to accommodate the shop a café and storage facilities, our attempts to seek funding from the Community Ownership Fund, we having been formally accepted to apply for the grant of £250k, was thwarted by the change of government. In the meantime the Village Shop has successfully applied for a new planning consent which was granted earlier this month and the Shop with the support of the V Hall will now be seeking alternative funding for that development. The new design is likely to reduce the cost slightly to around £380k meaning we will need to seek funding of c£250k after taking account of the funds in hand from the shop and the Hall. Funding plans have now to be drawn up.

THANK YOU

I would like to thank the committee for their support over the year; David Simpson for taking on the booking mantle and providing much needed knowledge and support and his renowned bar duties, Tricia Wilson for dealing with our Kitchen Hygiene rating and the Kitchen generally and Jo Hutchings for her sterling work as secretary ably supported by Mary Carter. Thanks once again to must also go to all those involved in the fundraising events who have put in a lot of hard work this year.

Andrew Conquest, Chair
Felsham and Gedding Village Hall
13 May 2025

Report for Felsham Village Council AGM May 2025

Good evening

Thank you for inviting me to present a report in the Felsham and Gedding Community Store.

The Shop has performed well financially this year with a lot of very good support from the communities of both Felsham and Gedding and as a result has managed to provide a profit which will be allocated towards the relocation of the Shop to an extension of the Village Hall. We were delighted, and very proud to have been awarded the Suffolk Community Building for 2024 award. This award provides recognition of the positive contribution made to a community by its Village Hall or Community Building that is:

- Having a positive impact on the lives of the people living in that community
- At the heart of its community
- Providing a vital service accessible to all members of the community

As you will all be aware planning permission has very recently been granted for this project and there are a number of meetings taking place as to the practicalities and future requirements ongoing. While I appreciate that this is something that has not taken place in the last financial year I think that it is important that everyone is aware of the Shop Committee's unequivocal support for the project.

The Shop and Post Office continue to be run by Volunteers from both Felsham and Gedding and without their support the Shop would not be able to exist. In a similar way the Management of the Shop is carried out by a Committee of volunteers to ensure that all and any surplus that is made can be reinvested into the community which for the foreseeable future will be the shop's relocation.

As Chair I must thank all of the Volunteers for the hard work and help to continue to feed the needs of the community by ensuring that the shop is open as much as it is – there are numerous similar organisations that really struggle to keep their shops open owing to a lack of volunteers. While this is positive there is a need for an increase in the number of volunteers and everybody will be welcomed no matter how many hours can be given or what role people would like to take.

Special mention should be given to Andrew Conquest, our Finance Director, who keeps the organisation in the rude financial health that it is as well as looking forward to the redevelopment. There is a long way to go with raising funds and, as I have done every year I think, we need to maximise the number of shareholders in the Shop – details are available in the Shop and shares are available at £10/share with no limit on the number of shares that can be purchased.

Again, I would like to thank my fellow Committee members for the work that they do both publicly and behind the scenes – the shop is there for the Community and the support is enormously appreciated but it does not run by magic!

Please continue to support this local institution that is there for the benefit of the Community .

13th May 2025

Felsham Charity Report 2025

The Felsham Charity is exclusively for the benefit of the residents of the parish and of the Church of St Peter in the Parish of Felsham and the following grants were available to all who have been resident in the parish for one year.:

- A Funeral Grant currently of £300.00 is offered to bereaved families to help with funeral costs
- An Education Grant of £250.00 is available annually to help with the cost of books, equipment etc for those serving serving an apprenticeship, or for people at college or university.
- The Fuel Grant has been increased to £150.00 and is offered annually to all residents over retirement age. It is restricted to one per household
- Hardship Grants are available on application, for any purpose: nursing costs, special equipment etc
- Interest Free Loans may be offered upon application.

If you are, or you know someone who is going through trying times due to redundancy or poor health, the Felsham Charity may well be able to help. Please do not be afraid to contact any of the Trustees: we are always discreet and never disclose any personal information.

In addition to the help provided to individuals, the Charity also contributes to Village Groups for the benefit of the whole community. This year's contributions will be made to the Parish Council for help with grass cutting around the village and to the Church, to help maintain the fabric of the building. Other groups that can benefit from donations include The village Friends, the Village Hall, the Playing Field and the Shop.

Through prudent investments our charity continues to be one of the wealthiest of similar village charities in Suffolk. The finances are very ably controlled by our Treasurer, Mr Andrew Conquest, and continue to be in good shape: the total net assets at the Year End (2024) £670,00.00. The charity derives its income from two residential properties in Stowmarket and freehold land in Felsham, as well as from investments in Aberdeen Standard Life. In the past year, net income available for distribution amounted to £23,000.00 and grants totalling £22,000.00 were paid out.

There are eight Trustees, responsible for the Charity, three *ex officio* appointed by the Church and five nominated by the Parish Council, and they are as follows:

The Revd. Sharon Potter
Churchwarden Brian Deards
Parochial Church Council Member, Patricia Wilson

Andrew Conquest
Brian Francis
Hayley Gilbrook
Ken Sparkes
Joan Llewelyn

The Charity's Secretary is Eileen Conquest.

Finally, please do not be reluctant to contact any of the Trustees: this charity was created for the residents of Felsham and is here to offer a helping hand whenever it is needed. Can I also say that Brian Deards will be stepping down as Trustee upon retirement as Churchwarden and Revd. Potter will be appointing a replacemen

F&G Playing Field Committee. AGM 2025 – Chairman’s report.

A very warm welcome to all in attendance today. Let me start by thanking the committee and associated volunteers for their sterling efforts once again in helping to organise and manage the two events we held on the playing field in the last year, and indeed for maintaining the site for villagers to enjoy.

Its been a relatively quiet year, but September’s Felsham Fair proved to be another roaring success – combining the best of the street fair and fun-day respectively. The formula of dishing out the responsibility between multiple groups in the village proved invaluable again; especially for a committee like ours which is stretched at the best of times. Sharing the profits also allowed the other village groups to benefit from using the playing field. That being said, it was a shame that the setting up and packing away fell largely on us alone, instead of being a joint effort. It is for that reason, and indeed to send a message to the village about the urgent need for new blood on the committee, that we’ve decided not to host a Fair on the site this year. In the hope that it might stir some reaction! There will, however, be a Fete in the village instead, which we have been invited to help with.

Bonfire night in November turned out to be a smashing hit, and a welcome return to profit following the previous year’s disappointing postponement ‘till December.

As we’re keen to stress every year, the event is never intended directly to be a profit-making exercise – it is done as a sort of gift to the village as thanks for their support, and if we make a profit that’s always a bonus.

Otherwise, the usual maintenance tasks continue. The condition of the play equipment has become a focus over the last year – Its been noted that much of the wooden climbing frames are reaching end of life and will need replacing in the near future. For the moment, though, all of the equipment has been rated as sound and some of the timbers on the climbing frames have been replaced where necessary.

More recently, a replacement gate has been installed at the end of the car park to improve the security of the storage container beyond. In tandem with this, the need for a new Village storage space has become evident in recent times, so we are making plans to clear and level some space next to our own container in order to allow a second unit to be placed there for use by other committees in the village.

Grass cutting on the site this year is being managed by the same company that is doing the greens/churchyard etc. I wish to thank the Parish Council for agreeing to cover the cost.

The only thing that remains is for me to mention is an update about legal action which was taken by one of the residents against the playing field committee last year. The claim was regarding the injury of an unsupervised child on the site. The case is still active, but no evidence has yet been provided by the claimant.

Let me take this opportunity to reassure all present that the site is safe and sound to use by all residents.

I shall close by thanking again the committee members and associated volunteers for their time and dedication to keeping this great asset going, as well as the villagers who use the site and enjoy it. We’re lucky to have such a wonderful asset. What we need is new blood on the committee to ensure it carries on!

Phil Cockell (Chairman)