Chairs Report- Denham Parish Council

This has been another challenging year for the Parish Council. We started the year with only three Councillors after Jane Gilmore stepped down. As we have run the Council with one Council member short over the last 5 years, we were delighted when Duncan McGregor agreed to join the Council in May. We do however still need a 5th Councillor and would encourage anyone who may be interested in supporting the Council to inform Wendy, our new Parish Clerk.

In the County council elections, Peter Gould became our new Councillor and Matthew Hicks remained in his role as District Councillor and we have continued to work closely with both of them on issues affecting the Parish.

We have continued to consider local planning applications and have been active in wider involvement by commenting on applications that are leading to an increase in poultry rearing sites across the district. We have also been particularly active in supporting residents with complaints linked to the operation of the Denham Feed Mill. We have represented residents concerns to both the District and County council in relation to the noise, traffic, road and verge damage and environmental impacts of the mill and this work is continuing. We have also continued to monitor the speed of vehicles along the main Hoxne Road, and the speed indicator appears to be moderating traffic speeds.

Over the course of this year, we, in conjunction with Hoxne, successfully applied for Quiet Lanes designation for both the Denham Low Rand from Shingle Hill Corner to the Hoxne Primary School and from the Low Road Junction with Church Road, with Hoxne Rd. We have completed all the necessary stages and are now awaiting signage to be installed.

Throughout the year we have maintained a constant focus on moving forward with the renovation of the Village Hall. In conjunction with the Denham Community Council, a charity in which all Councillors have invested significant additional time to support, £22,000 has been raised with another £15,000 dedicated to the project. The Parish Council has also secured another £28,000 of funding, the first £10,000 of which has now been agreed for release against the replacement of the roof which we hope will be completed before the summer. We have a grant application that is currently with the national lottery and which we should hear the result of shortly. Failing that we will continue to fundraise and another £15,000 would allow us to move forward with phase 2 of the project.

In October the Council was shocked by the sudden death of Rod Caird, our Parish Clerk. Rod had been with the council since 2018 and had supported the Parish throughout the pandemic. He was a wonderful character, and he is still greatly missed by the Parishes he served. After 5 months without a Clerk, we were fortunate to appoint Wendy Alcock who has a wealth of experience in local government and has been able to hit the ground running. Due to the reduced expenditure over that period, we accrued additional reserves which allowed us not to significantly increase the precept this year. However, having fully reviewed the governance of the committee it is likely that there will need to be a significant increase next year to support the effective functioning of the Council.

As the year end approached, the Parish Council worked with the Community Council to make plans for the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee. Details of the event to be held on Saturday the 4th of June from 1:30 pm at Greenlands Farm opposite the village hall. Please join us if you can to for a Right Royal Garden Party with afternoon tea, strawberries and cream and cocktails or a beer. There will be traditional music from local musicians and an old fashioned sing along. We look forward to celebrating this historic occasion with you all.