

Castle Acre Parish Council

Clerk: Mrs Libby Firth, 7 Sandles Court, Back Lane, Castle Acre, Norfolk PE32 2XF
Telephone: 07825 229345 Email: castleacrepc@gmail.com

Chairman's report to Castle Acre's Annual Parish Meeting May 2023

This report covers the 12 months to end April 2023 of the current four year term of Castle Acre Parish Council that runs to May 2023. At its meeting in May 2022, Councillors voted for Laurie Fisher as Chairman and Neil Patrick as Vice-Chairman of the Council.

The period was marked by royal events, firstly the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, followed by her sad passing in September 2022. The term will conclude with the Coronation of King Charles III. Sheila Moister led the Council preparations to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Inclement weather forced a rapid replan on the day, however a memorable celebration was enjoyed by all ages in the Village Hall.

The Queen's passing was marked in the village. In addition to Church services, a minute's silence was held at the village fete and a book of remembrance was opened. It was felt that the planting of memorial trees was the most fitting way to mark both events. Tim Hubbard represented the Council to assist village volunteers from the Horticultural Society in these tasks. The Parish Council would like to thank all the parishioners who kindly gave their time or donated money to support these events.

Other world events also impacted the village. The war in Ukraine led to a jump in world energy prices and, in turn, to an unexpected rise in UK inflation and energy prices. This impacted everyone's cost of living and for the Council, a sharp rise in grass cutting and energy bills. To manage the budget these increases had to be reflected in a rise of the precept.

Successes

The Castle Acre Playing Field Association (CAPFA) continues to work hard to support local sports and improve the village's playing field facilities. Following on from last year's new playing equipment and fencing, CAPFA applied for grant funding for a Multi Use Games Area. They have secured the majority of funds required and are actively working to secure the balance. A big thank you to Nigel Chambers, the CAPFA Chairman, and all the committee and volunteers who help out in the numerous sports and activities.

The Castle Acre Heritage Project, funded by the National Lottery, was highly successful in helping people explore the amazing natural and historic environment of Castle Acre. The project culminated with the restoration of the non-conformist burial ground. Well done to Anne Mason and her team and good luck with your ongoing Heritage activities.

The Village Hall Committee was successful in applying for grants for numerous upgrades including PV roof panels. The Council would like to thank Helen Breach who also works on this committee.

Frustrations

Dog fouling and littering by a selfish minority continues to frustrate. Thanks to Paul Slocombe and his litter picking team for helping to keep these problems at bay. Efforts to impose a traffic restriction order to close the South Acre ford to motor vehicles to help protect the adjacent SSSI seems stuck in legal limbo - this will remain an ongoing project.

Farewells

The end of this four year term has seen the departure of three stalwart councillors. Helen Breach, Martin Hickey and Martin Tate have decades of experience working on the Parish Council and they will be sorely missed. They were instrumental in getting the Castle Acre Neighbourhood Plan into effect which has strengthened the voice of the Parish Council in future planning issues. Thank you to all three of you for working so tirelessly for the village.

Thank you's

The Council would like to thank the small band of volunteers who help out with Parish Council projects around the village. In particular Paul Slocombe, Frank Moister and Len Rye. Also, thanks to Jim Moriarty, our outgoing Borough Councillor for his support and assistance throughout the period.

And finally, Libby Firth, our ever enthusiastic, patient and conscientious Clerk has decided to stand down. Good luck to Amy Hart who has taken over in the role.

Laurie Fisher - Chairman May 2023