

## MOULTON PARISH COUNCIL – REPORT - YEAR ENDING 31/3/2020

Clerk – Mrs Lorraine Stone – contact [moultonpc@gmail.com](mailto:moultonpc@gmail.com)

There was an uncontested election in May when 5 villagers applied to serve on the Council following the retirement of councillors Bill Rampling, Ron Wallwork, Peter Collin and Rachel Webb. Their service over a great number of years was much appreciated and Moulton was particularly indebted to Bill Rampling, councillor since 2002 and Chairman from 2007. Throughout his time on the Council, he had championed tirelessly for the interests of Moulton's residents and the villages beyond and was always the first to offer hands on assistance for any task in the village. He will be sorely missed on the Council, although the village still benefits from his continued help, & support of community events.

David Almond was elected Chairman on 8<sup>th</sup> May and the new Council was complete following the co-option of John Derry, Ryan Bragg and Dr Jane Horsnell.

During the year there has also been a change in the County Council representation. Robin Millar became Conservative MP for Aberconwy in December, and in January Andy Drummond was elected County Councillor for Newmarket and Red Lodge District (including Moulton). The Parish Council is looking forward to a productive working relationship, especially in the current situation which continues to be challenging with ongoing cuts to Authority funding, and the current trend to marginalise parish councils. In May District Councillor Roger Dicker was re-elected to serve Kentford & Moulton and he regularly attends meetings.

The Parish Council held nine formal meetings. Villagers are encouraged to attend and will be warmly welcomed. Councillors also attended District Council Forums, planning and Suffolk Association of Local Council meetings and have been briefed on a variety of local concerns and wider issues. A section of the Moulton website <http://moulton.onesuffolk.net> is dedicated to the Council. Agendas, minutes, accounts etc. are published here; agendas are also posted on notice boards and Moulton Matters publishes the Chairman's reports.

**The Community Speed Watch** team, co-ordinated by Tim James, continues with regular checks. More volunteers are always needed. The recently acquired additional speed display signs have had a positive impact on speeding at either end of the village along the B1085, and the data collection unit gives documentary evidence of the speed of vehicles.

**PLANNING MATTERS** – over 15 applications were scrutinised, and comments passed to the Planning Authority. Bill Ramping, on behalf of the Rural Parishes Alliance, spoke at the last Hatchfield Farm enquiry. He promoted sequential sustainable development across the District in an attempt to prevent the continued over development of the villages. The plans to build the largest solar farm in the UK on up to 3,000 acres of agricultural land surrounding the villages of Freckenham, Chippenham, Worlington, Snailwell and Isleham is being closely monitored by the Parish Council. Although not directly affected, if successful, it would have significant impacts on local communities and the environment, and further applications may follow closer to Moulton. Councillors had given their support to these parishes.

**HIGHWAY MATTERS** – services are now co-ordinated centrally and delivered locally from Rougham. All highway related issues have to be reported on the on-line tool [highwaysreporting@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:highwaysreporting@suffolk.gov.uk)

These were then processed and tracked electronically – the system was failing as it was not producing timely or reasonable responses, and engineers, often without local insight, were taking judgements over priorities and funding.

It has been another difficult year and despite the Council's efforts and a meetings with the Cabinet Member little progress to date has been achieved on many long standing issues including surface water on Chippenham Road, Newmarket Road (by the bus shelter) and in the layby outside the School. Road markings have been refreshed on Gazeley Hill, but others are still worn away at the junction with Brookside, the junction of Maltings Close/Newmarket Road and at the Boys Grave junction. The metal road bridge at the end of Church Road is badly in need of repair, the pedestrian crossing leading to the car park needs repainting, and numerous potholes and worn sections of roadway have been reported.

The long term strategic aim still was to improve pedestrian/cycle connectivity between Moulton & Kentford, the school and station. However the request for a **40mph speed restriction** from the School to Kentford would not be sanctioned as it did not meet the County Council's criteria as it is viewed as open countryside. Approval was only permitted for a 300m buffer zone (costing around £9,320) at the Moulton end. The Parish Council, our MP and County Cllr were pressing for the whole length of road to be an exception site. Until the limit was in place no further action could be taken on the safe route.

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**VILLAGE MAINTENANCE** – the Council is very grateful to Douglas James, who continues to maintain the village green, riverbank and playing field to an exceptionally high standard, and despite undergoing knee surgery he was only out of action for a couple of weeks. The grass areas along The Street, the B1085, road junctions and on housing developments are cut by the District Council in-house team, which had failed to maintain the standard of the previous independent contractor. The Council had been assured by the Open Space Manager that the service was being monitored and operations would improve.

Beautiful planting schemes have been again been managed by Mrs Dorothy Bowes and a team of volunteers who raise funds and keep the village looking colourful throughout the year.

- **Play Area** the equipment is checked on a weekly basis and undergoes an annual safety audit.
- **Riverbank** the Council continues to manage the banks, and clears the river of fallen trees and debris to prevent flooding and encourage wildlife.
- **Rodent control** – an increase in the rat population partly due to weather conditions was noted in the autumn, especially along Brookside. West Suffolk's Public Health officers had been monitoring the problem and liaising with homeowners. They were satisfied that the infestation was now under control.
- **Trees around the village green** works were carried out to damaged and diseased limbs.
- **Dog Fouling** is still a serious problem. Owners are urged to clear up after their dogs – bags are available free of charge from the PO Stores. The District Council is currently reviewing its policy on the provision and collection from dog bins. The bin located on the verge opposite The Street to Lark Hill footpath has been relocated to a safe off road location opposite the PO Stores, and Cllr Dicker has contributed to the cost of replacing the damaged bin by the Church for a larger dual purpose one.
- **Village Volunteer Working Parties** have taken place during the year. Your help dealing with general maintenance to play equipment, tables & seating, the tree belt adjacent to the playing field and drainage issues is appreciated.
- **Playing Field & Village Green** – the playing field continues to be well supported throughout the year, with four teams playing weekend league games during the football season. Parish councillors, Club members and village representatives have worked closely to ensure that this important resource can be enjoyed by all and offer a safe environment for village sport and exercise. New nets were acquired following a generous donation from Cllr Dicker's locality budget. Outdoor fitness classes are also held 3 times a week on The Green or on the playing field.
- **Public Footpaths** – many signs around the village had been repaired/reinstated and the Parish Council was still pressing for better signage for the right of way through Griffiths Yard.

**FINANCE** - the parish precept will remain at £32,000. At this level the Council hopes to maintain reserves to cover future unexpected calls on village funds.

**VILLAGE CHARITIES** – the Trustees are working with the Charity Commission to modernise the aims and amalgamate the three into one named The Moulton Charity.

**PARISH ADMIN** - Lorraine Stone our Clerk for the past 34 years retirement plans have been put on hold during the Covid 19 crisis. It will be a challenging role to fill, as Moulton has been fortunate to have had only 2 parish clerks in the last 70 years. The vacancy had been widely advertised and there was much interest. The recruitment process will continue later in the year.

**Village Hall** continues to be extremely well used and our thanks go to Jill Goodwin, Secretary and Jerry Goodwin, Treasurer and all members of the Village Hall Committee. **The Community Choir** performs at a variety of local venues and practices at the School on Tuesday evenings

**Village Stores, PO & Coffee Shop** continues to flourish. Do make every effort to support this excellent local resource. The Council appreciates the efforts of all those who work there. **Moulton News** the Council is grateful to Jill Goodwin and Elissa Rampling for editing our excellent newsletter, and to Elissa & Mike Rampling for managing the website.

**COVID 19 a co-ordinated flexible and responsive approach has been formulated by the PC, existing village organisations and the newly formed Community Resilience Group – grateful thanks to all those who are currently helping all those who are at risk and vulnerable – there will be challenging weeks ahead.**