

# Ousden Parish Council

## Chairman's Yearly Report 2022

### **Chairman's Report**

#### **Introduction**

The Parish Councillors remain exactly the same going into 2022 with no change in the numbers nor the councillors themselves. The only difference this year is that Silvia Pettitt now holds the post of Deputy Chairman.

Once again, the Parish Council managed to carry out its normal duties and meetings during the last twelve months both virtually and more recently face to face.

I am pleased to say that Joanne Kirk remains the Clerk for Ousden PC and continues to do all the hard work behind the scenes to make the councillors' work much easier and so as usual I wish to thank Joanne for her continued support.

I would also like to thank Bobby Bennett (Suffolk County Council) and Mike Chester (West Suffolk Council) for supporting the parish wherever possible.

I am pleased to say that despite the COVID pandemic the village of Ousden has fared very well and although cases of the virus have found their way into the Parish the overall effect has been mainly good news. Moving into the future the virus appears to be having less effect on the public in general and a more normal life appears to be returning so long may this remain.

Finally, I would like to thank all the people in the village who do their bit and help to ensure Ousden remains a pleasant place to live.

### **Ongoing Village Issues**

#### **Police / Neighborhood Watch**

The very good news this year is that as far as reports show Ousden has been completely crime free with nothing of substance to report, however, there continues to be reports of suspicious vehicles and occasionally suspicious activities in or around our village. Please remain aware of your surroundings and do report anything suspicious. One thing worthy of mention is the increase in fraud crimes which are mostly online or by phone or by text which are designed to draw us in with messages that may be vaguely familiar to us. I have witnessed this at first hand and with members of the village so please be aware and don't answer things that you feel are suspicious.

Please note Helen Gale is still your Neighbourhood Watch coordinator and is regularly in contact with the police and other enforcement/support groups. Please feel free to contact Helen if you witness or hear of anything suspicious.

#### **Defibrillator**

I am glad to report that the unit has not been used this year and has remained fully available throughout the year. Remember to call 999 before using the unit.

#### **Affordable housing**

Online results are still showing a very low demand in Ousden. The online facility is still available should anyone want to register a need for affordable housing or as mentioned before simply approach one of your PC members for guidance.

#### **Village Hall**

The 'Ousden Village Hall Management Committee' and the 'New Build Committee' are still working very hard to get into a position to build a new village hall and work to secure planning permission is proving very difficult. The task has been made much more difficult recently by the considerable hike in all building materials making a like-for-like building almost impossible to afford so other options are presently being investigated. The Parish Council remains fully supportive of the project.

### **Speeding on village roads**

Although reports and evidence of the worst cases of speeding through the village seem to have reduced there is still an underlying problem with speeding as captured by the Vehicle Activated Sign 'VAS' and by general observations on a continuous basis. This is obviously of continued concern as pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders and children etc. are always at a higher risk from speeding vehicles.

The village now has a further VAS post to allow the monitoring of traffic coming into the village from Hargrave as this road is particularly bad with vehicles entering the village at speeds in excess of 50 mph despite the 30 mph signs and not slowing until the 'S bends' at Pound Green.

The village has signed up for using a camera capable of capturing the number plate details (ANPR) of offending vehicles which may then lead to prosecutions and reduced speeding. However, these cameras are few and far between and have to be shared by villages all over Suffolk and will only get used in villages and towns where speeding is the worst which means Ousden will probably never get the opportunity to use one. The PC are completely committed to addressing and reducing speeding and will continue to look for other opportunities to reduce the problem.

### **Quiet Lanes**

Suffolk County Council have begun an initiative to allocate certain small roads and lanes as 'Quiet Lanes' which is designed to encourage drivers of motor vehicles to respect and give way to more vulnerable road users.

One of our councilors has been working to get several of the lanes around Ousden included in this scheme and I can report this has been successful. This means that Lords Lane, Back Street, Wickhambrook lane from Lady's Green to Genesis Green and the little lane from Lady's Green to Hargrave Road will be included in the scheme and later this year should have signs erected to show where these areas start and finish.

Sadly, the designated 'Quiet Lane' areas don't come with a reduction of speed limits from 60mph to 30mph which is of great disappointment but hopefully most drivers will join in the spirit of the scheme and give vulnerable users the right of way.

### **Road Drainage on Front Street**

During the winter period villagers would have noticed once again the continuing problem with the road drains all the way from the top to the bottom of Front St despite a deep cleanup of the drainage system carried out during 2020 and continuing into 2021. The defects in the system resulted in thousands of gallons of water running down large distances of the hill and covering large areas of the road and for many weeks at a time.

There is a possibility that the drains system towards the bottom of the hill will now be completely blocked or even damaged which will require proper repair work in addition to normal road sweeping and jetting which will be done on a regular basis now.

Outstanding repairs will hopefully be carried out before the end of autumn to try and prevent the problem repeating yet again but resources are always in short supply. The Parish Council will continue to monitor the road conditions and request work to be carried out as necessary.

### **Phone box**

The Ousden phone box has had its first full year of use as a book exchange/ village library and reports indicate it is a hit. May I thank Sophie Mitchell for continuing to keep an eye on the phone box as well as other villagers who I know have a tidy up when passing.

### **Anglian Water Major Infrastructure Works**

The residents in and around Ousden especially those who live along Dunstall Green Rd, In Lady's Green and to the south of Littly Woods and Back St will soon notice major water pipe laying for Anglian Water. There is a very large pipe running north to south which crosses the Hargrave Rd near Lady's Green and runs on towards Depden, and a smaller spur which runs along the south of the village from Lady's Green to Lidgate which will cross Wickhambrook Lane, Lady's Green byway, Lords Lane, Back St and onwards to Woodditton water tower.

These works are proposed to take place this summer but due to complications with plans for a pumping station near Lady's Green there could be delays.