

Ousden Parish Council

Chairman's Yearly Report 2025

Introduction

Another year has passed and It's been a fairly straightforward one for Ousden Parish Council. There have been some changes to our team of councillors for various reasons and I am firstly very happy to welcome Fiona Bills to the team and look forward to working with her in the future.

On the other hand, I am very sad to announce that Helyn Dudley will be stepping down as a councillor after several years with us. Helyn has been a joy to work with and has been very proactive over the years so I would like to thank Helyn from the bottom of my heart and wish her all the very best. Helyn will obviously be leaving a vacancy in the team which we hope to have filled already and an announcement will be made once due processes are complete.

Our Clerk Joanne Kirk remains with us and continues to do all the hard work in the background to keep the councillors informed and supported and long may it continue. I would as usual like to thank Joanne for her support.

I would also like to thank Bobby Bennett (Suffolk County Council) and Mike Chester (West Suffolk Council) for attending our meetings and for supporting us and keeping us informed of the wider district and county council issues.

Ongoing Village Issues

Dog Attack

Saturday, 3rd May 2025 – A dog was attacked by another dog near Littly Wood. The attack caused nasty injuries to the back of the neck that needed immediate out of hours veterinary attention. The vet costs were paid by the owner of the attack dog but nevertheless it is extremely disappointing that this issue has once again come to light. The incident was reported to the police.

Police / Neighborhood Watch

Over recent years I have been able to report that crime has been very low in Ousden with only one or less real incidents. This year is much the same with no actual burglaries reported although we do seem to get more reports of people looking to commit crime. Below are two recent incidents that could have ended in a worse outcome.

28th March 2025 – Incident SC-28032025-1 – After being disturbed a dark pick-up truck with a cab over the back (possibly a Nissan Navarra) came down the byway at speed between Hoyes Cottage and Beechwood at Lady's Green at midnight and smashed through the barrier at end of byway before taking off at speed towards Hargrave. Witnessed by John and Helen Gale who reported it to Police. No action taken by Police.

Tuesday, 15th April 2025 – Break in to a garage building at Ousden House at around 9.45pm. Reported to Helen Gale on 16th April by the owner. It was believed that nothing was taken when the burglar was disturbed by a passing neighbour, the neighbour then alerted the owners. The burglar fled in a vehicle – no description of the vehicle was reported. It is not known if the owner reported the incident to the Police.

There were other issues in and around the village which were not officially reported but it's clear that we need to keep an eye out for suspicious activity.

Finally, please contact Helen Gale your 'neighborhood watch coordinator' if you see or hear any suspect activities in or around your village as she is regularly in contact with the police and other enforcement / support groups and can get messages to other villagers quickly when required.

Defibrillator

Once again, it's good to report that the unit has not been used this reporting year. The unit has recently been serviced and is in full working order. Remember you must call 999 before you will be given access to the unit should it be required.

Village Hall

The 'Ousden Village Hall Management Committee' and the 'New Build Committee' continue to work on the new village hall project. Fundraising and detailed planning is now the focus and finding suitable contractors / builders to carry out the building work. The Parish Council are in full support of this project and continue to help the process where possible.

Speeding on village roads

The 50/50 share of a new Vehicle Activated Sign 'VAS' with Hargrave is going very well and we have a very good working relationship with Hargrave. The new device can measure speed of passing vehicles in both directions which is good as it means the sign does not have to be switched around so much. The good news is that looking at recent statistics and comparing them with a year ago there seems to have been an improvement with a greater number of people sticking to or close to our 30mph limit. There is of course the occasional fool who thinks the speed limits don't apply to them and on one occasion a speed of over 70mph was logged through Front St and similar approaching the village from Hargrave towards Pound Green.

In addition to our own VAS we do still get the use of the ANPR (number plate recognition) camera along with many other villages in the county.

Road Drainage and Potholes

Over the winter period we have had less floods on our roads and less potholes reported. Clearly the village drainage systems are working better after recent improvement works and the winter this year was milder and dryer than some recent years but nevertheless this is a good result. The Parish Council will continue to monitor the road conditions as before.

Byways

The byways over the last year have weathered very well, again due to a milder winter but also due to less 4x4 traffic which is partly due to the warning signs we erect over the winter period. However, we have seen a significant increase in groups of scrambler type motorbikes using the byways. Although the motorbikes cause less physical damage than a 4x4 they are very often noisy and occasionally the riders are bad mannered and deliberately anti-social which has been witnessed by several people. If anyone witnesses this type of behavior, please report it to the police as long as you are safe to do so.

John Gale – Ousden Parish Council Chairman