

Ousden Parish Council

Chairman's Yearly Report 2026

Introduction

Here we are again one year later and with a world full of problems and unrest at least it's been a reasonably settled year again in Ousden and for the Parish Council. Once again there has been a single change to the councillor's line up and I would like to welcome Jessica Pettitt to the PC with the rest councillors remaining the same as before.

A big thank you goes to our Clerk Joanne Kirk who remains with us and continues to do all the hard work to keep the councillors informed and supported.

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

Police / Neighborhood Watch

Saturday 9th August 2025 - Attempted Aggravated Break In

In the early hours of the morning on Saturday, 9th August, a person was seen attempting to break into vehicles in Ousden. The male perpetrator was wearing a balaclava and when challenged by the owner of one of the vehicles, he produced what was thought to be a screwdriver and threatened the resident before running off and escaping through gardens backing onto open farmland, of which it appears he probably had prior knowledge. The incident was reported and followed up vigorously by Helen Gale our neighbourhood watch coordinator but no identification or arrests were made.

Saturday 20th December 2025 Stolen Agricultural Trailer.

A farm trailer was stolen from Hall Farm at the bottom of Front Street in the evening / night. The thieves took advantage of the fact that the yard is busy and is generally easily accessible with horse owners and also farm machinery and delivery vehicles coming and going. The theft was reported but neither trailer nor thief were recovered or identified. Since the incident security has been improved by a substantial set of automatic gates.

There are always other issues in and around our neighboring villages so as usual please 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

The defibrillator was called for once this year but luckily was not required or used and was returned 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 still the focus and discussions with the National Lottery are still moving forward and going well. The Parish Council increased the yearly funding for the hall this year to help support its annual running costs and other expenses where possible.

Speeding on village roads

The Vehicle Activated Sign 'VAS' which we exchange / share with Hargrave still working very well and over the last year speeding though the village appears to be reducing.

The VAS can measure the speed of passing vehicles in both directions which gives much better indications of where the speeding offences are worst. As always there are still drivers whose speed is excessive and sometimes very excessive but luckily these are few and far between.

The ANPR (auto number plate recognition) camera system which used to run in tandem with our own VAS has been damaged by criminal speeders several times now in other villages and presently there is no sign of its return.

Finally, the PC have joined a long list of other villages and towns in Suffolk in order to raise the issue of speeding and to challenge the process of changing speed limits on certain roads which at the moment is a very difficult process and very expensive.

Road Drainage and Potholes

After a very wet winter and an extended period of flooding at the bottom of Front St and subsequently a significant number of very large potholes one of which almost made it right across the road, I am glad to report that the damage is fully repaired.

Clearly the village drainage systems are working but when they block the County Council Highways fail to respond despite very many defect reports to them which literally makes things ten times worse.

To help bypass and speed up response times to some village problems the PC will be attending training sessions which will enable them to carry out remedial works for the County Council which they are presently not allowed to do.

Byways

The byways once again have weathered very well over the winter period helped by the temporary barriers which at least stops most 4x4 traffic. Sadly, we now seem to be getting very large groups of motorbikes using the byways some of which have no respect for other users. The scrambler type motorbikes using the byways are often very noisy and anti-social to people who live close by and occasionally the riders are bad mannered too. 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