

Brettenham & Kilverstone Parish Council
Annual Report for 2023/24

Introduction. The Parish Council continues to hold its meetings in the Kilverstone Estate Office by kind permission of Lord Fisher. Full meetings have been held at roughly 2 month intervals with additional 'Provisional' meetings interspersed as required for any urgent business. The Council continues to work with 7 councillors.

Precept.

The Parish Council, recognising the financial difficulties faced by many households, decided **not** to increase its Precept for the financial year 2023/24. However, conscious of the need to match its income to its running costs and to meet contingencies, and in view of increases in its operating costs due to continuing inflation, the Council has agreed to incorporate a 5% increase in its budget for the forthcoming year (2024/5).

Greater Thetford Partnership (GTP).

The Parish Council, as a GTP Board member, continues to support the Thetford Sustainable Urban Extension (SUE) programme to build 5,000 new homes and supporting infrastructure in the Greater Thetford area, and to regenerate the Thetford, Croxton, Brettenham and Kilverstone areas. Projects being considered by the GTP Board are the development of Thetford Station, including a new footbridge and possible expansion of the car park, options for improvements to the A11 junctions and roundabouts, increased health facilities, which include additional facilities at the Healthy Living Centre (HLC) and an extension to its car park. The Parish Council continues to argue for improvements to the Ely Rail Junction, Fiveways roundabout, as well as the A11/A14 junction (J38) which does not currently allow traffic to route from the East to North and vice versa which results in many heavy lorries continue to drive through Thetford to join the A11.

Thetford SUE in Kilverstone (Phase 4)

SUE Outline Planning Application. These plans were initially published in 2011 and were based on an assumption that the Thetford Town Boundary would be extended to cover the entire SUE area. However, following a Local Government Boundary Commission review, it was concluded that the rural parishes of Brettenham and Kilverstone should be excluded from the revised Thetford boundary and, thus, retained the western boundary of Kilverstone Parish along the A1075, Norwich Road. This confirmed that Phases 4 & 5 of the SUE would remain in Kilverstone.

Significantly, Pigeon has recently requested that elements of SUE Phase 4, in Kilverstone, be brought forward into Phase 1 and the Parish Council now has had sight of the more detailed plans affecting Kilverstone submitted as part of the revised planning application. The Parish Council has formally objected to this application as the dense developments proposed for Kilverstone would change the rural nature of the parish into an urban one. The Parish Council has subsequently met with the developers, and the planning authority, to discuss these proposed changes., and these negotiations are ongoing.

The Parish Council's objective is to modify the proposals for developments within Phase 4 of the SUE to align more closely with the vision statement of its current Joint Neighbourhood Plan (JNP). The JNP vision is for "a gradual transition from urban to rural to be achieved through the adoption of appropriate building styles, choice of local materials, appropriate densities and levels of green infrastructure which reflect and enhance the local character". Specifically, we wish to reduce the housing densities and building heights in the current plan in order to achieve a gradual transition from an urban Thetford to a rural Kilverstone.

Joint Neighbourhood Plan (JNP).

Following changes to boundary between Croxton and Thetford resulting from a formal boundary review, the JNP with Croxton has been amended to reflect this change. In the longer term, there will need to be a more comprehensive amendment to the JNP to reflect the requirements of the revised National Planning and Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Breckland Local plan. The Parish Council is already in discussion with planning specialists to advise on this work.

Kilverstone Alms House.

Brettenham and Kilverstone Parish Council is the Trustee for the Kilverstone Almshouses. Our thanks go to Councillor Hughes who has managed the Alms Houses for several years. Following training provided by The Almshouse Association, Councillor Skirving is now the main point of contact for the Kilverstone Almshouse Trust Charity, is a signatory of the trusts bank account and the registered point of contact with the Charity Commission on behalf of the trustees, the Brettenham and Kilverstone Parish council. Following the closure of the local branch of Barclays Bank it is intended to move the trusts business account to Lloyds Bank Thetford during the coming year.

A number of long term maintenance issues have been addressed during the past year including the resolution of heating problems to No.2 by the provision of electric panel heaters to sections of the bungalow, repairs to plumbing and replacement of the kitchen tap to No.2, emergency repair to an electrical socket in No. 1 and the removal of moss build ups from the roofs of No.1 and 2.

A fire safety inspection was undertaken to both bungalows on the 7th May by the local brigade to ensure the continued health and safety of the beneficiaries.

The trusts finances remain in a healthy state.

The trustees will continue to work closely with the beneficiaries to ensure their ongoing health and safety is maintained and the Almshouses provide supportive accommodation.

Community Safety.

Crime in the parish still remains at a very low level, overall less than one incident per month, with no serious crimes reported. NCC Highways reacted to our concern about accidents at the junction of the A1066 and C149 and made appropriate adjustments to the junction.

Although the Parish had an offer from Thetford Town Council to use their SAM2 the logistics required to operate it were onerous on a small parish and as a result we did not pursue the offer. However since Thetford changed their 40mph speed limits to 30mph they were no longer able to loan out the SAM2 as they now fully utilise it themselves. Traffic Survey reports for Rushford Road were forwarded to The Camera Safety Partnership for consideration and they have since visited the area of concern. There have been no recent complaints to the Parish Council regarding speeding traffic or off road illegal motorbike scrambling.

The police have introduced a new parish newsletter and changed the format of the safety meetings that the Parishes are invited to participate in. We are now part of the Thetford, Bedingfeld and Forest Wards Safe Neighbourhood Action Panel (SNAP) which will set police priorities and which will meet every 3 months at a different location each time. As different locations could mean considerable travelling for some residents there is now an option to join the meeting via Microsoft Teams.

The perimeter fencing around the balancing pond in Arlington Way was in a state of disrepair and was considered a safety hazard. Anglian Water Services Ltd, the registered owners of the balancing pond, accepted the responsibility and have carried out the necessary repairs.

Riverside Path.

The Riverside Path from Arlington Way to Nun's Bridges within the Parish area continues to be maintained, part-funded by the Parish Council in

conjunction with the BTO, and is a very well utilised facility allowing easy pedestrian access, linking with the Thetford Town maintained section of the Riverside Path, to the Nun's Bridges area and into Thetford Town.

Arlington Way Public Open Space (POS).

The Arlington Way POS is maintained by a private contractor funded by the Parish Council from its Precept. In addition to regular grass cutting during the summer months, routine inspection and maintenance of the POS perimeter fencing is conducted as necessary. The Parish Council has been awarded a grant from Breckland District Council's 'plant an orchard' programme. Plans have been drawn up, and it is expected to plant a combination of Apple and Pear trees in the autumn planting season. The POS is a much appreciated facility and was used for a local community celebration for King Charles III's Coronation. A 'Beacon Lighting' ceremony will be held on the POS on Thursday 6 June in recognition of the 80th anniversary of the D-Day landings. All are welcome to attend.