

Community Connection: 4 January, 2017.

First of all, I hope you had a splendid Christmas, and that 2017 will be a healthy and happy one for everybody.

We had our first Parish Council meeting of the year last Monday, 2 January: you will find the minutes published on this website shortly,(please do refer to them), but I would like to mention a few of the issues that arose: our County Councillor, Beverley Spratt, in relation to Norfolk CC's financial outlook, described the situation as 'not great', but the Council Tax position for 2017-8 is 'not as bad as the press say'. Beverley is normally reliably informed and straightforward in his view, so we can probably take this as 'wait and see' at this stage. Barry Stone, our District Councillor with South Norfolk District Council (the ones who collect the council tax), suggested there could be a need for an extra 2% for the care budget, and 1.8% for the 'general' council tax rise. So, we could see a 3.8% rise in our council tax (I believe this would be for a Band D home)....but, please, this is best-guess prophecy at this stage and not the definitive figure by any means – we'll know that soon enough! We also learned that, partly due to a new government approach to distribution of the 'New Homes' payment (from district to county councils) that our district council needs to find a total of an extra £8 million.....a somewhat repetitive story.

We looked at the situation concerning the ongoing Harvest House planning 'process' for the proposed developments, currently before our district council. Wrapped up in this was the clear feeling that Bressingham's interests and misgivings concerning this issue had not been well represented at SNDC level: after discussion, Barry undertook to ensure that this would be given the appropriate focus in 2017. Members of the community made very helpful contributions when invited to speak, and indicated clear dissatisfaction with many areas of the planning 'process', a need to look at the use of the Harvest House site historically and beyond the immediate issue should the current application fail and the realities of what it would mean to live close to the proposed development. The PC acknowledges with gratitude the huge contribution of those community members who are making such great efforts to represent our best interests.

We also looked at the problem of the passage of large lorries heading for a Kenninghall chicken unit through our villages – often at very unsociable hours, and reminded everyone to take special care over home security during the coming months – in addition to burglary, we have had reports of heating oil theft. We are undertaking to persuade those responsible to improve our 'street furniture' – road signs, post boxes and so on, and will ask Norfolk CC Highways to attend to road deterioration in Folly Lane. On a more positive note, Barry Stone indicated the possibility of some extra discretionary funding....not a fortune, but something towards benefitting the community, the Village Hall, perhaps, in which we all have a common interest, and we welcomed the promise of better Broadband.

Richard.

