

CAISTER PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2021 – 2022

Caister Parish Council continues to hold Council Meetings on the first Monday every month except when that Monday falls on a bank holiday, then the meeting is automatically moved to the next available Monday. Time is set aside to allow the public to ask questions of Parish, Borough and County Councillors if they are in attendance. The normal time allocation of fifteen minutes for public questions may be extended at the behest of the Chairman, particularly if there are any contentious items on the Agenda.

The last twelve months has seen Council meetings being held on-line and later in the Village Hall when the last Covid restrictions were removed, allowing face-to-face meetings. The pandemic has once again had an adverse effect on Council income due to Hall bookings falling during restrictions on public gatherings. Bookings are at last beginning to increase but there is still a way to go before we reach the levels required to provide the Village with the kind of availability that was provided in previous years.

Following the lifting of restrictions last August, the Village has gradually moved towards what we would call normality but isn't quite the same as it was pre-pandemic. It seems that people are still a little reticent, especially about large gatherings and this is probably the result of the Omicron variant still being present in the area. The fact that some residents are reluctant to mix with large groups of people is not a local problem, the world seems to be reporting the same problem, particularly in the case of air travel with passenger figures still down over 40% compared with pre-pandemic levels.

The Council is very happy to report that we still have a full Council, which is an achievement after all the lockdowns and interruptions which the Council have endured. The planned events for this year are well underway and it is hoped that the Village Carnival which is to be held on 26th June will make up the current cash shortfall for the completion of the zip wire, which is to be built on the King George V Playing Field. To help the Council achieve this, all the proceeds from this year's Carnival will go towards the financing of this project. Other planned functions include a Village celebration for the Queen's Jubilee and of course our annual Light Up Caister .

Over the last couple of years there have been questions asked about Parish Council spending and on a few occasions some residents have complained that they do not know how the Council spends the money that it receives from the Council Tax, and that there isn't any sign that the Council have spent for the benefit of the people of Caister. The obvious response is that all spending is recorded and presented at each Council meeting. Financial documents are also published on-line together with the Minutes of all meetings and the Council Facebook page keeps us all up to date with what is going on.

In the last few years, the Village has acquired new bus shelters, benches at various locations, the Cemetery has been updated and will soon be digitalised, the Village Hall has been modernised with many new features, we have a Village Cinema, a flourishing Village

Magazine, Websites and many, many other new innovative projects paid for by the Council. There is an answer to those who do not think that the Council spends its money in accordance with the wishes of the residents: Come along to the meetings and state your opinions, or even better, become a Councillor and have a say in how the money is spent. The Council is top heavy in the number of men holding office, and it would be a bonus if we could attract a few more women onto the organisation. The cost to the Village for all the things that unpaid Parish Councillors undertake in their spare time is less than 30p a week which is value for money in anybody's eyes.

As we approach the most important Council meetings of the year, the Annual Parish Meeting and the Annual Parish Council Meeting, I would like to thank all those Councillors who have made and continue to make Caister the best Village in Norfolk and thank them for their dedication and for their hard work. I would also like to thank the residents for their support throughout the last twelve months. Let us all look forward to the coming year, and please continue to support our efforts and don't forget to put 26th June on your calendar so you earmark CAISTER CARNIVAL DAY.