

Good evening, this is your Chair's report for 2024. It has been a very productive year for the East Goscote Parish Council.

Council and Staff:

This year we have had one new Councillor join the Council, Mr Richard Peberdy.

In May 2023 five Councillors did not apply to be re-elected: Councillors D Westerveld, V Oakes and R Axon ended their term of office. I would like to thank them for their service and efforts.

Cllr N Shivers and D Cannon returned to offer their help once again and continue to be excellent contributors.

At present we have eight Councillors and two vacancies.

I'd like to use this opportunity to highlight the excellent work of the Council's staff.

Our new admin assistant has been promoted to Deputy Clerk and increased her hours. Charlotte Turlington is working very hard to support our Clerk and is currently building up her knowledge. She is currently undertaking the CILCA qualification which she hopes to successfully obtain during 2024.

Liz Pizer, our Clerk, has worked for the village for over 30 years and has now reduced her hours. Liz ensures the legal duties of the council are fulfilled, as well as providing admin support and staff supervision.

Her work is vital in enabling the Council to perform its function and getting things done for our village.

Charlie Cadle continues in the Caretaker's role and provides exemplary work around the village. He is assisted by Paul Harper who helps when needed.

A heartfelt thank you to all Staff and Councillors this year.

Planning Applications:

During the year 16 planning Applications have been received and considered by the Parish Council.

Redrow Homes have not yet started building on the Melton Road site and the application is still at the Reserved Matters stage. We have had no update on when works may begin.

Remembrance Sunday.

Cllrs Shivers and Cllr Needham attended the Remembrance service on behalf of the Council. The council marked the event with poppies on the lampposts.

Village Facilities

The Tennis Court continues to be popular. During the winter the court gets closed for protection, this year we are having the court professionally cleaned and a new binder coat and acrylic paint is being applied to the court. We have changed the membership this year so that all members now join on an annual basis at a cost of £10 per year (resident rate) which is excellent value.

We have had a new gate fitted to the Jubilee playing fields and new safety surfacing to the single cradle swing. Our play areas will have their annual professional inspection in April.

Vandalism:

The cost of vandalism for March 23 – March 24 amounted to £220 mainly on damaged safety surfacing, which is extremely low compared to other years.

Dog Fouling:



This continues to be a constant complaint received by the Clerk and Councillors, this is despite the fact that thousands of poo bags are sold and there being a plentiful supply of bins around the Village.

The library continues to distribute dog bags at £1 per pack of 50 and any profit from the sale of the bags is retained by the library towards its upkeep.

Allowing your dog to foul without clearing up afterwards is totally unacceptable behaviour and we need YOUR help to catch those people responsible for spoiling our streets and green spaces. If you know an environmental offender, call 01509 634564 or email: cleaner.greener@charnwood.gov.uk.

The council has installed information signs to deter dog fouling and encourage people to behave responsibly and ensure their dogs were under control when using the playing fields.

During 2023 the Parish Council invested in a Dog Warden for a period of 6 months to patrol outside the school and along Weavers Wynd and also the Jubilee Playing Fields. He gave out dog bags and spoke with dog owners.

East Goscote Library

The Chair of the library has sent the following report on behalf of the Community Library:

The support from the residents of East Goscote continues but we could still need more customers. We continue to have the support of East Goscote PC as well as St Hilda's Church.

Sales of various items have continued and brought in valuable income. Jigsaws are proving popular.

We continue to struggle with the size of our energy bills. Various changes have been made to try energy save but this has not worked as the unit cost has risen.

There are now regular visits from Bizzy Bees and Broomfield School. There was a good response for the Summer Reading Scheme.

We have 22 volunteers including a gardener, who work to a DIY manual rota system. Four new volunteers have been recruited and we have lost two due to them moving away. We have never failed to open due to volunteer shortage during the past twelve months.

Unfortunately, Liz Pizer, the treasurer for the Trustees, has resigned but Charlotte Turlington has taken on the role.

The Coffee Mornings continue to contribute extra income. The Santa evenings continue to be successful. Santa has a new suit which has been loaned to other organisations.

Our finances are stable although there are only a few bookings and events.

Use of the standard library services is stable, but footfall has dropped to 90 per week.

The sale of poo bags continue to be a useful fund-raiser although the wholesale price has increased, and we may have to look at passing the cost to our customers.

The Romp and Rhyme sessions for youngsters have restarted and parents are able to bring their children to the playgroup sessions.

Neighbourhood Watch

Cllr Harris has taken on the role of Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator. More NW volunteers are required around the village.

Snow Warden Scheme

East Goscote Parish Council is registered with the County Council Snow Warden Scheme. This means that they supply salt and pay the Parish Council to clear snow and ice around the village where it is considered dangerous.

Long Furrow

This long-standing magazine continues to be published quarterly.

After several years preparing the Long Furrow, John Malpus has stood down and Charlotte Turlington has replaced him as the Editor. John wishes to thank Charlotte, Gareth, Ian and David for the work that they put into ensuring the Long Furrow is issued on time.

Gareth Roberts continues to design the magazine with help from the Editor.

Volunteer distributors are always needed so please get in touch with the delivery coordinator, using the contact details provided in the Long Furrow magazine.

The Council continue to support the publication.

Tree Work

A new tree warden has been appointed - Mr Richard Peberdy, who is currently learning the role and undergoing training on various aspects of tree care.

Police Beat Surgeries

These are being held at the Community Library on the First Wednesday of the month between 11am and 12 noon.

Christmas Event

A very successful event was held in December 2023 for people aged over 65 living in the village. It was very positive, and we received great feedback from those who attended. Thank you to all who helped to organise and gave time on the day.

Reaching People Fund

We were successful in obtaining a grant of £2,000 from the Reaching People Fund thanks to the hard work of Cllr Cannon. This was spent obtaining the services of a qualified ecologist to carry out a UK Hab ecological survey of our village. Our Wildlife audit has now been completed and is available on our website. We are working through the recommendations and trying to obtain funds where possible.

Along with the audit, the fund also provided for 3 guided walks around the village. These were well supported and the final walk "Walk on the Wildside" is being held on 25th May – details will be in our next Long Furrow magazine.

We also held a "Hibernator event" where residents were shown how to create homes for hibernators for their gardens.

Finally, the fund has provided some wildflower seeds and templates to promote a Hedgehog highway in the village – these will be distributed over the summer.

Another outcome of the report was to designate the "dog walk" as a Local Wildlife Site (UK priority habitat) due to its rarity, species richness and plant diversity. We are installing an interpretation board for residents to learn about the area.

Merchants Common

The shops/ residential area and small warehouse units were offered for sale by Auction on 14th February. Despite not selling at auction the area has since been sold. We have tried to establish who the new owners are, however, Jelsons are withholding the information at present. We do know that businesses will not be affected as the leases are being transferred to the new owners.

Electric car club survey

In response to a resident enquiry, the Council has investigated the installation of electric charging points and considered establishing an electric car club in conjunction with local not-for-profit organisation Green Fox Community Energy Co-operative. Through funding secured by Green Fox, a car club allows users to access an electric vehicle without owning one, with fast charging points installed in the village. To gain residents views on this the Council created a survey in November 2023, however after only receiving 4 responses agreed not to pursue this idea.

Resilience Project and Community Response Plan

The resilience group/office staff prepared an advisory leaflet which was distributed to all households that could be affected by local flooding of the Queniborough Brook.

The group have met on several occasions and have updated our community response plan. A tabletop exercise is being held in May to see if the plan is effective and efficient.

Review of our Mowing Contract

Over the winter months the Parish Council reviewed the mowing contract following recommendations from the wildlife audit and in favour of enhancing wildlife within our village. It was agreed that we would trial two areas for a reduced cut (from 15 cuts to 7 cuts per year). These are at the rear of the Meadows and the north area of Lilac Way.

Bluebells have been planted at the Meadows and more seeding will be carried out in the Autumn. We will monitor the trial at Lilac Way.

Website

Our website is available to our residents and has a wealth of information. It is very user friendly and is easy to navigate. Unfortunately, we could not continue with the phone app due to a software issue. The number of visits to our website over the last 12 months was 202,898.

Greener Goscote

A group of local residents regularly volunteer to undertake projects such as litter picks and maintaining the recycling centre behind Merchants Common. They help add to our green and colourful village with the planting of trees, wildflowers and other plants which encourage and support wildlife. This year they have maintained the wildflower verge alongside the brook, the planters at the top of the pavilion driveway and replanted some of the Queens Green Canopy trees along with having a great input into the reaching people events. Thank you to these volunteers for their time and hard work.

Next Year's Projects Include:

For next year we hope to continue with the high standard that the village is managed. We are replacing the post and rail fencing at Lilac Way, looking into the possibility of a new Council vehicle, updating some of our play equipment and hope, once again, to hold a Christmas event for our elderly.

Thank You's:

I would like to thank all the Parish Councillors, our current County Councillor, Mr Poland, and our MP, Mr Argar for their help and support during the past year. In addition, I would like to thank our staff for their service and expertise during the year.

Chair (Laurie Needham)