

Cottingham Parish Council Chairman's Report 2023-2024

April 2024

Hello and welcome to the 2023/24 chairman's report, this report is a quick outline of the work and duties carried out by our parish councillors, clerks, officers and volunteers.

During 2023-2024, Cottingham Parish Council has continued to provide a range of services and support to Cottingham residents, promoting the welfare and development of the village whilst aiming to protect and enhance its historic and cultural identity.

The Parish Council comprises 11 members, with the following serving during 2023-2024

T Booth (co-opted 15/2/24)

C Cantrell

K Casson

A Duke

D Graves

Jump (co-opted 8/6/23)

L Kemp

D Longbottom (co-opted 18/1/24)

J Marten

J Stubbs (co-opted 20/7/23)

M Ward

Parish Council Meetings

During the year the Parish Council has continued to meet on the third Thursday of every month apart from August and December. There have also been four extraordinary meetings to deal with matters that emerged between scheduled meetings. The Parish Council has considered recommendations from the ERYC Community Governance Review that the number of members be increased to 15 members from May 2027, as well as issues raised by residents and ongoing proposals to improve parish services and facilities.

The Council has worked closely with other agencies including ERYC, HEY Hospitals, Biowise, National Rail and Humberside Police to seek solutions to local issues such as concerns about speeding and parking, foul odours, shop crime and anti-social behaviour and flooding.

The Parish Council has also welcomed the contribution of Ward Councillors who provide an extremely useful conduit between the parish and ERYC and ensure that parish issues are represented and considered by the unitary authority.

Committees

Cottingham Parish Council operates through a number of committees and working groups which focus on particular issues.

Planning Committee

This Committee comprises the whole membership of the Parish Council and meets regularly to consider planning applications and submit comments to the Planning Authority. A key role of this Committee is to ensure that applications are in accordance with the agreed Neighbourhood Plan and that proposals are not detrimental to the environment, appearance or character of the parish and do not contribute to traffic management issues. In addition to considering planning applications, the Planning Committee has also reviewed the results of speed surveys across the parish, proposed parking restriction, location of benches and salt bins and the impact of odours from Biowise, as well as feeding into consultation on EV recharging spaces in the village. Through the Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group the Parish Council has also responded to a number of national and local consultation exercises:

DLUHC - Technical Consultation on the Infrastructure Levy

DLUHC – Consultation on implementation of Local Plans

ERYC – Draft Design Code

ERYC - Sustainable Transport Draft Supplementary Planning Document of the ER Local Plan Update 2020 - 2039.

DLUHC – Consultation on Street Votes Development Orders

Allotments Committee

During 2023 -24 the Allotments Committee has focused on updating the tenancy agreement which was introduced in December 2023 and working on clarifying the respective roles of the Council and the Cottingham Northgate Allotments Association (CNAA) who manage the allotments on a day to day basis. A number of allotments have become available during the year, but demand still outstrips supply and the Parish Council continues to investigate options for an additional site.

Finance Committee

The Parish Council set up a new Finance Committee in July 2023, which will take responsibility for budget monitoring and ensuring the Council complies with both internal and external audit requirements. The Committee will also investigate opportunities to obtain additional funding through grants and other funding opportunities to help the Council meet its objectives.

Personnel Committee

The Personnel Committee has undertaken the recruitment of a new Clerk and overseen the recruitment of an Administrative Assistant and Town Centre Officer. It is also undertaking a review of HR policies and procedures to ensure the Council is compliant with current legislation and good practice.

Council Priorities

The Parish Council identified a number of priorities for 2023 -24 including environmental improvements, further development of events, the establishment of a Town Centre project, improvements to recreational facilities and investment in administrative systems.

Environmental projects

During 2023-24 the Parish Council has been working on plans to develop the Memorial Gardens, looking at new planting schemes and refurbishment of the central bed in conjunction with local volunteers. The Council has also successfully applied for the Beck Bank amenity area to be renamed the Queen Elizabeth Memorial Garden, Parish Councillors are keen to develop this area as a community facility and involve as many residents as possible in planning its future shape and usage. We have already planted hundreds of spring bulbs and started to look at the tree works required. Local residents have been asked if they would be interested in joining a Friends of Queen Elizabeth Memorial Garden group to help develop a plan for the garden, identify and apply for funding and help implement improvements.

Council assets have also been reviewed and repaired or improved where necessary. We have installed 9 new benches, several new bins and replaced two of the village entrance planters and signs. We are also in the process of upgrading noticeboards and updating the village maps. To help local businesses keep their premises accessible for customers and visitors we have also provided each local business with access to a bag of rock salt during the winter months.

As part of a focus on greening the village councillors and volunteers have planted thousands of spring bulbs and hope to relaunch the Cottingham in Bloom competition in the summer.

The Parish Council has also been investigating the development of a blue plaque scheme with the aim of recognising the contribution of former Cottingham residents to a range of developments and achievements. We are hoping to launch this in the next few months.

Recreation

ERYC has offered the opportunity through committed sums to invest in multi-gym equipment in the village, and to help collect evidence of demand the Parish Council has reissued its recreation survey to find out what facilities residents currently use and what they would like to see. Once the results are analysed, the Council will work with ERYC to develop proposals for various sites.

Town Centre Project

The Parish Council has been successful in obtaining match funding from ERYC to support the development and implementation of a Town Centre Action Plan with the aim of revitalising the village centre and encouraging greater footfall from visitors to the area. The funding will support the appointment of a Town Centre Officer who will work with the Parish Council, local businesses and community organisations to develop and implement the Action Plan and support the delivery of a range of events in Cottingham to help promote what the village has to offer.

Events

As in previous years we have held the highly successful Cottingham Day and Christmas Festival events each of which have generated approximately 20,000 visitors who have enjoyed a variety of food and drink, fairground rides and attractions and been entertained by local musical groups and artists. We are planning to repeat these events in 2024-25 and are also looking at working with partners to commemorate D Day on 6th June.

Administrative systems

2023 – 24 has seen a number of changes in the Parish Office, with the recruitment of two part-time Clerks and an Administrative Assistant. As a result we are reviewing all process and procedures and updating policies. We have also recently upgraded all IT systems and improved the systems for live streaming of meetings.

Strategic Plan

During the year the Parish Council has developed and adopted a Strategic Plan which will cover the period 2024 -2027 . We have agreed a vision for Cottingham to be

“a strong and vibrant community where residents, businesses and voluntary organisations thrive”

and have set out a series of aims and aspirations to deliver this vision and an action plan for 2024 - 2025. Our aspirations are for Cottingham to be:

- A resilient community with a good quality of life, working towards a sustainable, greener future.
- A thriving village centre.
- Attractive and clean public realm.
- A population that is healthy and feels safe.
- Green spaces that are accessible to the whole community.
- A vibrant community and voluntary sector.
- An effective and well-run Council.

Copies of the Strategic Plan can be found on our website. We will review progress against our Action Plan regularly and update it to reflect proposed actions for future years.

Increase in the precept

In order to achieve the aims of our Strategic Plan we have comprehensively reviewed the Council’s Budget and identified a number of areas where we need to increase spending. The majority of the Parish Council’s budget is funded from a precept included in Council Tax bills and collected on our behalf by ERYC. This year we have made a modest increase in our precept demand which equates to approximately £6.95 per year for a Band D property.

Grants

The Council has continued to support local groups and organisations through its grant funding. In 2023 -24 we have supported:

Cottingham Christmas Lights
Cottingham Little Theatre
Park Lane Community Group
Cottingham Tennis Club
Cottingham Village Trust – Operation of Public Toilets
First Aid Training

Overall the Parish Council has had a very successful and productive year and looks forward to building on this work in 2024 - 25.

Councillor Kevin Casson
Chairman