

## Chairman's Report – Elmswell Parish Council – 2009/2010

I am pleased to be able to report another year of real progress across a range of initiatives and to record my thanks to those who have worked towards continuing success.

This time last year we were coming to the end of the Village of the Year roller-coaster ride as the Village of the Year Cook Book ordered its second print run. However, the spirit that was generated by Elmswell's dramatic success has stayed with us. The community confidence and the general lifting of the spirits have informed many of the activities and initiatives upon which I am pleased to report.

- The recognition of the village as Suffolk's Greenest Community, as I reported last year, has provided further momentum on green issues – most remarkably in the Council's co-operative venture with the Elmswell Amenities Association and the Lukeswood group towards the establishment of the community wood, green cemetery and allotment initiatives at Church Road. This represents dramatic and invaluable community facilities for Elmswell which will endure as a benefit for ever.
- Further eco-progress has been made with the provision of bicycle racks at Blackbourne and with the scheme to encourage local groups to take on a 3 month stewardship of our very successful recycling centre at Station Road...income from this was up again this year at £1871.00. The Council also supported the 'Breathing Spaces' planting of a new hedge at the cemetery – 220 plants in under an hour by 78 individuals.
- Continuing collaboration with the Amenities Association in funding Sue Messenger, our Youth worker, who has taken on the challenge of establishing links with the youngsters in our community and feeding their input into planning for an ever-growing population
- Pressure over the last 40+ years for a pavement at Warren Lane finally came to fruition and the Parish Council played a significant role in ensuring that the exercise was carried out with as little disruption as possible as well as contributing to some of the design features which included extra street lighting. The result is generally considered to be a great success.
- Blackbourne remains our key community resource and, in tandem with the Blackbourne Management Association, the Council has had new car park barriers installed and a new floor laid in the hall itself. The facility is impeccably maintained and Cllr Peter Edmonds, as Bookings Secretary, ensures that it is fully used. The drawbacks of the provision that can be made there are being dramatically addressed by the Council's proposal for a Phase II extension. This is orientated towards youth activities and indoor sports provision and will be the subject of a planning application in the near future, as recently and comprehensively endorsed by this year's Annual Parish Meeting. Cllr Mike Schofield must take considerable credit for having driven the Phase II Scheme forward. Meanwhile, in collaboration with the Bowls Club, a splendid new shelter has been provided for players and spectators at the green which remains a credit to the Club which maintains it.
- Work has just begun on a toddlers' play area at Blackbourne. This scheme has been driven by Cllrs Marian Abbott and Ann Richards and promises to provide another valuable facility for our ever-increasing population. Funding has largely come from the Planning agreement under which Blacksmith's Way was built on the former Thurlow Nunn Standen site adjacent to the Blackbourne car park.

Once again I am frustrated by having been able to give only a hint of the work put in by Councillors and of the innumerable small results that add up to another year of service to the village. I should mention Dick Burch who works long and hard to maintain our sports fields as well as leading the monthly footpath walks and masterminding the litter picks; Eric Buckmaster who beavers away behind the scenes investigating grants and other funding possibilities; Alison Schofield who took on the most successful Spring bulb planting project we have yet seen and John Petchey who is always ready to help in extremely practical ways – particularly when a lorry is needed!

Once again, we all owe a huge 'thank you' to our Parish Clerk, Peter Dow. His unstinting devotion to all that is good in our village is an example to us all. I am personally enormously grateful to him for being central to so many positive initiatives and for making my duties as Chairman of your Parish Council so much less burdensome than they would otherwise be. He is ever ready to serve both members of the public and Councillors with advice, energy & experience. Those of us who are committed to the good of the village appreciate only too well the huge benefit which we all reap as a result.

Finally, I have written in previous years of the obstacles which have been put in the way by a tiny but previously effective few, bent on nothing other than disruption and destruction and with no positive aims or agenda. In the light of the huge benefits which Elmswell has received recently and which, I believe, will continue to receive, such opposition, whilst not actually extinct, has steadily dwindled to a level whereby Councillors have learned to accommodate the problems which such behaviour creates and refuse to allow themselves to be deflected from their determination to forge ahead with exciting and well-supported projects. I am most grateful to them for their support, dedication, perseverance and commitment.

I have been proud to serve as Chairman of Elmswell Parish Council over the past year and look forward with enthusiasm to seeing the work of so many Councillors continue to bring the rewards which our village so amply merits. Thank you.

David Barker  
Chairman – Elmswell Parish Council  
17 May 2010